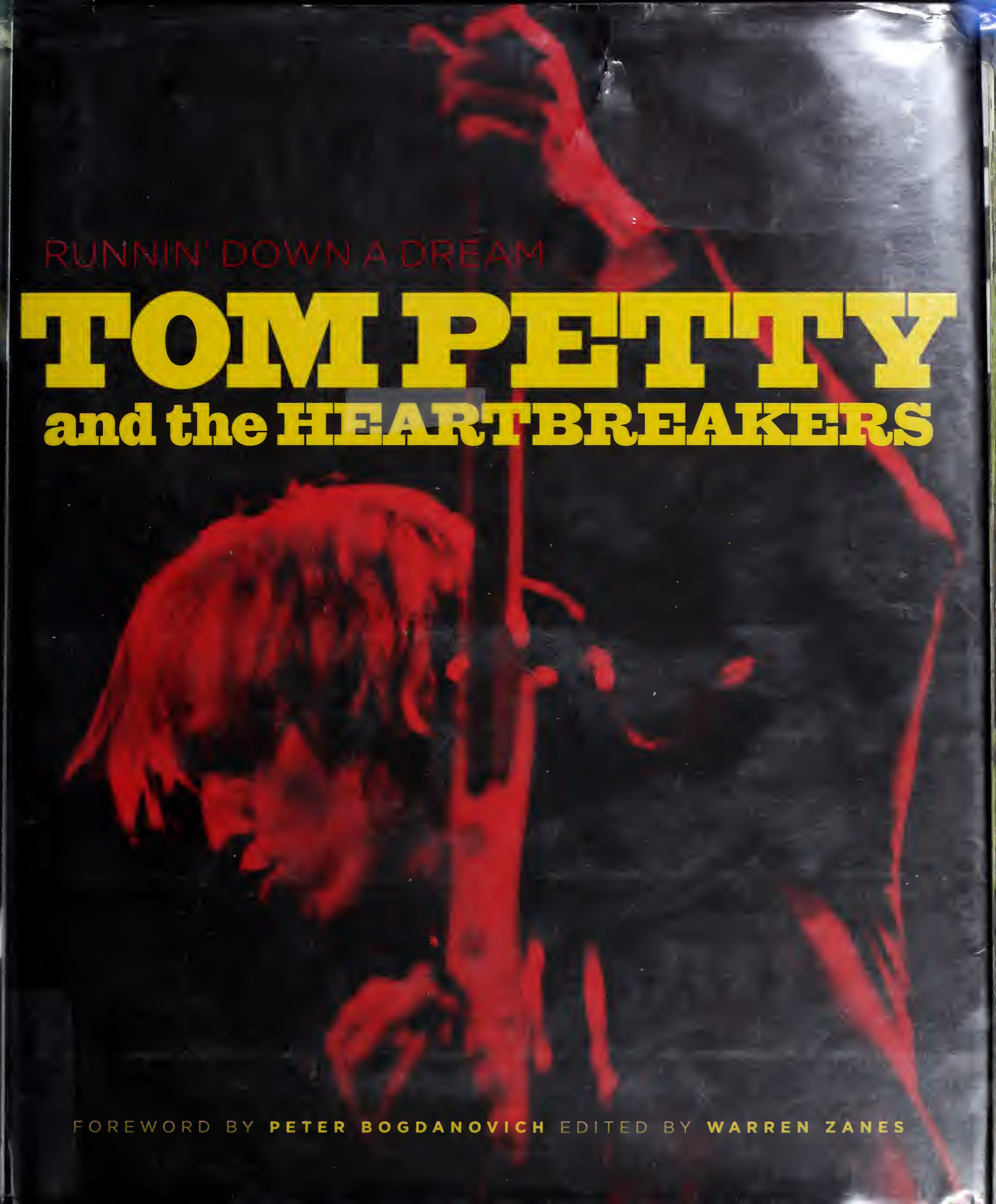

RUNNIN' DOWN A DREAM

TOM PETTY and the HEARTBREAKERS

FOREWORD BY **PETER BOGDANOVICH** EDITED BY **WARREN ZANES**

$39.95 U.S.

TOM PETTY
and the HEARTBREAKERS

RUNNIN' DOWN A DREAM

Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers are widely considered to be America's greatest rock-and-roll band. Over the course of three decades they have built a reputation among their peers as the gold standard for what a rock-and-roll band can be. Driven by Petty's gifts as a songwriter and by the band's remarkable power as a unit, they have sold more than 50 million records, earned 18 Grammy nominations, and been inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. "Free Fallin'," "American Girl," "Refugee," "I Won't Back Down," and "Mary Jane's Last Dance" are among the Tom Petty songs that have lived first as hits and stuck around to become classics in the American songbook.

Runnin' Down A Dream brings together hundreds of photographs—many never before published—and materials from the Heartbreakers' personal archives. Woven into the fabric of these remarkable images are interviews conducted for a new film documentary by director Peter Bogdanovich, revealing discussions with Petty, the Heartbreakers, and the group's inner circle of friends and fellow performers. *Runnin' Down A Dream* gives readers an unprecedented look, often from the artist's point of view, at a life and career marked by challenges and creative victories.

Born into a time when the music industry was still relatively young, the Heartbreakers went into the thick of it all, with a future full of dreams and an unwillingness to stop before they got where they wanted to go. *Runnin' Down A Dream* is a tale of triumph and of liberation, told with Petty's inimitable candor, humor, wisdom, and rare humility in the face of remarkable success.

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RUNNIN' DOWN A DREAM

TOM PETTY
and the HEARTBREAKERS

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RUNNIN' DOWN A DREAM

PETTY

ARTBREAKERS

FOREWORD AND INTERVIEWS BY PETER BOGDANOVICH

EDITED AND ADDITIONAL INTERVIEWS BY WARREN ZANES

CHRONICLE BOOKS
SAN FRANCISCO

Editor's Note

In 2006, Tom Petty was approached with the idea of filming a documentary on the subject of his life and career. The plan was to put director Peter Bogdanovich together with Petty, a meeting of two American mavericks. The project quickly grew in its proportions. Bogdanovich conducted extensive interviews with Petty, the Heartbreakers, and the artist's inner circle of friends, associates, and fellow performers. The wealth of materials that accumulated sparked the idea that a book project would be a natural outgrowth of all the film-related activities. What emerged is *Runnin' Down a Dream*, a volume that puts selected Bogdanovich interview material side-by-side with artifacts and images drawn from the Heartbreakers' archives. Personal, certainly intimate, *Runnin' Down a Dream* takes you straight into the world of one of American popular music's treasures, Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers.

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Chronicle Books LLC
680 Second Street
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www.chroniclebooks.com

Cast

*(In order of appearance)

TOM PETTY: AS HIMSELF
JIM LENEHAN: MEMBER OF MUDCRUTCH, HEARTBREAKERS' LIGHTING DESIGNER
BRUCE PETTY: YOUNGER BROTHER
TOM LEADON: MEMBER OF THE EPICS, MEMBER OF MUDCRUTCH
BENMONT TENCH: MEMBER OF MUDCRUTCH, HEARTBREAKER
BILL FLANAGAN: MTV NETWORKS EXECUTIVE, AUTHOR
MIKE CAMPBELL: MEMBER OF MUDCRUTCH, HEARTBREAKER
DENNY CORDELL: PRODUCER, OWNER OF SHELTER RECORDS
RANDALL MARSH: MEMBER OF MUDCRUTCH
EILEEN BASICH: SHELTER RECORDS EMPLOYEE
RON BLAIR: HEARTBREAKER, FORMER OWNER OF BIKINI STORE
TONY DIMITRIADES: MANAGER
DAVE STEWART: MEMBER OF THE EURYTHMICS, COLLABORATOR
ADRIA PETTY: ELDEST DAUGHTER
ELLIOT ROBERTS: COMANAGER WITH TONY DIMITRIADES (1979 TO 1987)
JACKSON BROWNE: SINGER-SONGWRITER
DAVE GROHL: LEADER OF THE FOO FIGHTERS, MEMBER OF NIRVANA
JIMMY IOVINE: ENGINEER, PRODUCER, MUSIC EXECUTIVE
RICK RUBIN: PRODUCER, LABEL OWNER
EDDIE VEDDER: MEMBER OF PEARL JAM
STEVIE NICKS: MEMBER OF FLEETWOOD MAC, SOLO PERFORMER
HOWIE EPSTEIN: HEARTBREAKER
ROGER McGUINN: MEMBER OF THE BYRDS, SOLO PERFORMER
STEVE FERRONE: HEARTBREAKER
JEFF LYNNE: PRODUCER, TRAVELING WILBURY, FOUNDER OF ELECTRIC LIGHT ORCHESTRA
SCOTT THURSTON: HEARTBREAKER
JIM LADD: DISC JOCKEY
JOHNNY DEPP: ACTOR

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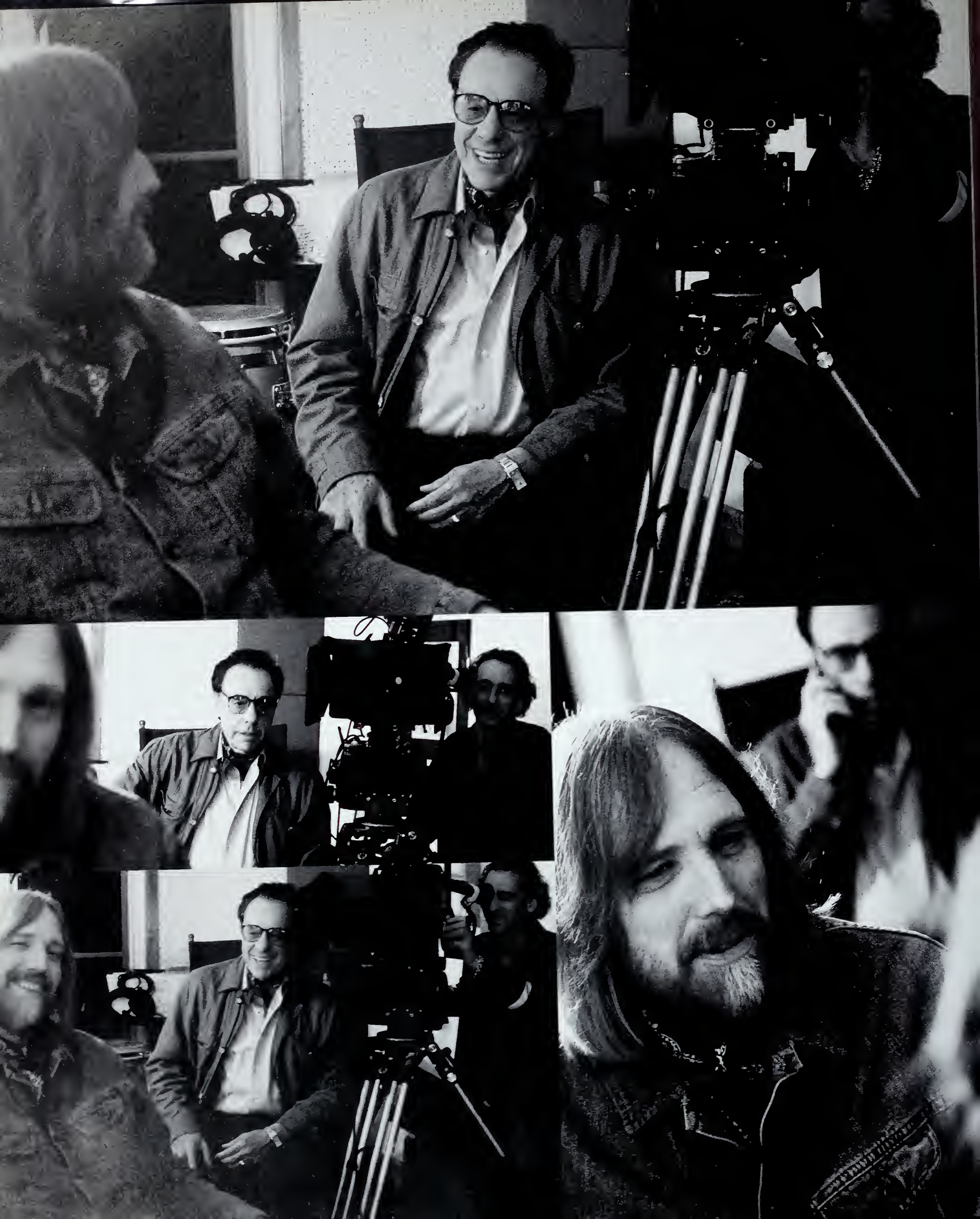
Foreword

A lot of Tom Petty's songs are like movies. Tight, evocative movies that expand in the mind far beyond the few minutes they take to play. This kind of economy of expression is natural to a poet, and that's what Tom is. One time I commented on the brilliant succinctness of a particular song, and he nodded, "Yeah, I only had two lines for the second act." Actually, Tom's heartfelt obsession with his art and absolute refusal to compromise remind me of some of the great picturemakers I've known over the years, such as Orson Welles and Jean Renoir.

Whether it's the "good girl" from Reseda who loves Elvis and Jesus ("Free Fallin'") or the reluctant waitress who sometimes "used to sing" ("The Best Of Everything") or the "rebel without a clue" ("Into The Great Wide Open") or that American girl "raised on promises," the people in his songs are so real that they resonate down the years. While the lyrics are often very specific, they remain impressionistic enough to be interpreted and experienced in numerous ways. These are songs filled with genuine emotion, without artifice, and deceptively simple. At heart, Tom is a cool romantic, a restless troubadour from the Golden Age.

Having spent nearly two years working with Tom Petty and his associates on a documentary about his work—with and without the Heartbreakers—I can attest to his seriousness as an artist. His dedication to the music he creates, as well as his integrity, is already legendary. It's certainly not an accident that several key musicians of the



last fifty years worked closely with Tom and grew very fond of him, from George Harrison to Bob Dylan to Johnny Cash.

His Heartbreakers are widely acknowledged to be among the very finest musicians in rock history: in particular one guitar virtuoso, Mike Campbell, who also cowrote many Petty hits, and one keyboard virtuoso, Benmont Tench, who seems to know every song ever written. Both men have been with Tom from the start. He also has extraordinary backup from bassist Ron Blair, drummer Steve Ferrone, and Scott Thurston, adept at everything.

It's no coincidence that Tom comes from America's greatest fount of writers, the South, which birthed Mark Twain, Tennessee Williams, William Faulkner, Thomas Wolfe, Truman Capote, and so many others. Like only the best novelists, he possesses a superb visual sense, which helps to explain his major role as a pioneer in the glory days of MTV videos. Uniquely, Petty has an uncanny ability to make his work sound entirely new and familiar at the same time.

As a singer, Tom has a distinctive, edgy sound. This, combined with an unusual sensitivity, creates a potent, ambiguous mixture that is strangely addictive and haunting. Perhaps that's one of the reasons his fans are so devoted, loyal, and diverse in age. At a number of the 30th Anniversary concerts in 2006, we talked to teenagers in the audience, all of whom told us their parents played Petty and the Heartbreakers and they found the songs hip enough to adopt themselves. His popularity now spans three generations. When performing, Petty is remarkably charismatic in a laid-back way, yet he gives a great deal of himself to the audience. His shows build in emotional scope, from an initial sense of intimacy to a larger-than-life experience not unlike what I've felt with soaring grand opera. It's no wonder Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers remain among the most popular and durable concert attractions in show business history.

Petty's courage in the face of malignant authority or exploitation has repeatedly been tested and has repeatedly triumphed, as will be clear in this book. In his bravely honest album *The Last DJ*, he went against the entire dehumanizing corporate society we have increasingly become:

There goes your freedom of choice

There goes the last human voice...

But then Tom has always told the truth in his work—what he calls being "real." That's no doubt why the music doesn't date, why it still sounds so immediate, so fresh.

Peter Bogdanovich

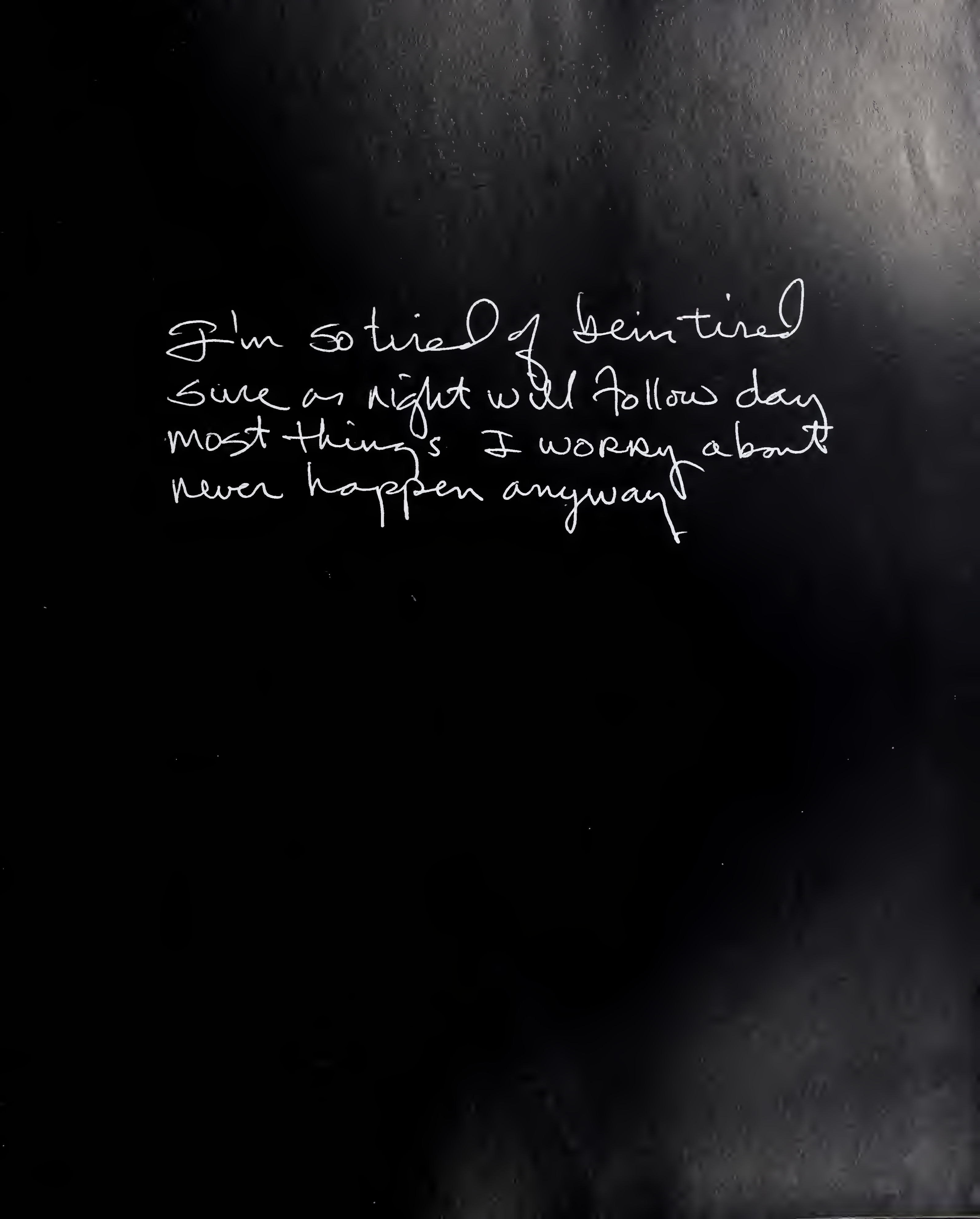
Tom and Peter Bogdanovich on the set, 2007.

Preface

I've worked hard. I've focused my ambitions. All that. But at the end of the day, the most important career turns have been the ones I never could have planned. Guys like Benmont Tench and Mike Campbell came into my life like it was meant to be. I couldn't dream that up. Two of the best musicians in the world just walked right into my life—and completely grasped what I wanted to do. Add to that walking backward into working with Bob Dylan and joining the Traveling Wilburys, becoming allies with some of rock's greatest record-makers, guys like Rick Rubin, Jimmy Iovine, Jeff Lynne, Denny Cordell, Dave Stewart, and George Drakoulias—and not to mention my long-lasting friendships with heroes of my youth like George Harrison and Roger McGuinn. The tangle of coincidences that allowed it all to happen this way is just too much. At a certain point, you can't just file it all under good luck.

Maybe I'm just at that stage in life where I'm beginning to see the faint outline of the whole picture and have started to think of my career as something bigger than me. The music belongs to so many people. And that shift in thinking is very freeing. Things become simpler. I just try to be responsible to a gift I've been given. And that's a job I'm comfortable with. I mean, you won't see me taking all of this down to the pawnshop. I plan on keeping it.

Tom Petty


I'm so tired of bein tired
Sure as night will follow day
most things I worry about
never happen anyway

It's much more than a job. It's something you have to do. It's like being possessed. Some people get possessed with the lord and have to go out and preach sermons the rest of their lives. We were possessed by rock-and-roll music and to feel fulfilled, had to go out and play gigs the rest of our lives. It's something you're always going to do. You can quit, but it's really like the sailor and the sea—if he never goes back, he's just going to think about it for the rest of his life, be suspended in a state of longing. I don't think it will ever stop.

PREVIOUS PAGES:

Knebwarth Festival, Hertfordshire, England, June 24, 1978. An audience member gave Tom his first top hat.

THIS PAGE:

The Heartbreakers in 1976. From left: Mike Campbell, Ron Blair, Tom, Stan Lynch, Benmont Tench.

We did a session with Annie Leibovitz for the cover of You're Gonna Get It!, *which at the time was being called* Terminal Romance. *We were fans of Annie's work because of the great* Rolling Stone *covers she'd done.*

When we got the pictures back, I remember Noah Shark, our engineer, saying, "No, no, no, no, that's not it." He had an opinion on most everything. But he had good instincts. He felt the pictures were just too bright, that the album was dark and moody and needed a cover that reflected that. After some badgering we were convinced to change it—and by that time Annie was no longer available to do another session. That was when we did the other shoot with David Alexander and got the blue cover.

When I look at Annie's shot, which I really like, I can see that she captured us all pretty much the way we were. She's got Stan laughing. Some sessions can wear on and on and on. But Annie has a way of getting you relaxed. This picture is a real honest document of who we were then.

LEFT:

Benmont, Ron, Tom, Mike, Stan, circa 1977.

PREVIOUS PAGES:

The US Festival, San Bernardino, CA, Sept. 4, 1982. Tom plays cat and mouse with audience.

Chapter One/ Escape

We lived in kind of a low-end suburb. You wouldn't really call it middle class. The kids I knew all had the same type of parents—their dads had been off to the war and had come back. Life was pretty good. It was the fabulous '50s, you know.

THE OTHER FLORIDA

Tom Petty: Gainesville, Florida, USA. A lot of times when I tell people I'm from Florida, they picture Miami. Gainesville was nothing like that. Gainesville is in the north central part of Florida, closer to Georgia than Miami. Closer to Georgia geographically and certainly in spirit. Miami was five or six hours away, but it may as well have been many oceans away, really. I come from the South, not its fringes.

Jim Lenehan: We were all good Florida crackers.

Tom Petty: When I was born, in 1950, Gainesville was a little town. What made it unique was having the University of Florida right there. The school made Gainesville a little less backwater than it might have been otherwise. But there was a farming community still active, the last traces of the agrarian South, I suppose. It was a real mix of people. You could run across just about any kind of person there. And I did.

I had a pretty good childhood in many respects, though my father was kind of strange in some ways. A wild guy. That part of my youth was tough at times. No excuse for nostalgia. My dad wasn't around a lot, tended to come in late at night. I didn't see too much of him.

Bruce Petty: I could tell there was always a friction between the two of them.

Tom Petty: We lived in kind of a low-end suburb. You wouldn't really call it middle class. The kids I knew all had the same type of parents—their dads had been off to the war and had come back. Life was pretty good. It was the fabulous '50s, you know.

COLOR CODES

Tom Petty: My father had a variety of jobs. At one point he owned the only grocery store in the black part of town. I have memories of being very young and going there with him each day. This was before I started school. He'd put me in a little dirt lot behind the store. I would be left out there, eventually finding a group of black kids from the neighborhood who I could play with. They'd try to con me into sneaking candy out of the store and things like that. Then I would go home in the late afternoon and play with the white kids.

Tom Leadon: His family invited me to dinner with them. I was having trouble understanding them because they had such thick Southern accents.

I was a skinny little kid with a weird haircut. But she is talking to me and says, "You're growing your hair, I see." I said "Yeah, I've got a band." And she hires us to play the intermission at her school dance. We struck gold. Word got out, and we found this kid who had already graduated from high school, a bit older than us, and he played the shit out of a guitar. We went to my house, everyone plugged into the same amplifier, and, wham, the heavens split open. It was the biggest rush in my life. We're doing it. We're making this music.

Tom Petty: It was the South, and it was that time before the Civil Rights movement. There would be two drinking fountains, one saying COLORED and one saying WHITE. I guess that's when I first really noticed there was an awful injustice here. By the time I was approaching my teens it had finally become a national issue. A lot of people were asking questions. Life was changing in towns like mine.

Benmont Tench: There's a great misunderstanding about the South. It's always good to remember Tennessee Williams and William Faulkner, Ray Charles, all these people.

Tom Petty: In retrospect, I'm grateful for the experience I had as a child, shuttling between neighborhoods with my dad. I didn't think twice about who I played with in the morning and who I played with in the evening. I just wanted to play, right? But at that age some crucial thinking gets put into place, quietly, there under the surface. I think it's worth remembering that for a musician, for an American songwriter, the movement between black and white music is the most important movement there is. Always has been. That's Elvis Presley's movement, Stax Records' movement, Motown's, the Beatles'. I feel like my travel between neighborhoods probably, in some way, meant something that eventually factored into the music. The South has always been a special place when it comes to music. And the black music of the South is the key ingredient.

VINYL

Tom Petty: My mother worked for the tax collector's office selling license plates. I remember being a very young child and my mother getting us these little children's records that were usually on yellow vinyl, nursery rhymes and such. I liked the whole idea of the record player, of the records. I suppose it was just the feel of them and the look of the player that got me first. I still like to get my hands on vinyl.

My parents listened to a bunch of music. Certainly hillbilly music, country music, was around in the house. My mom liked Nat King Cole. She would have the *West Side Story* soundtrack and *South Pacific*. She also played gospel records.

I remember being five or six years old and hearing "Rock Around The Clock"—"One o'clock, two o'clock, three o'clock, rock." This impressed me. I thought, that's really great. What is this? Then I didn't hear much about it for a while. Later on I made more headway. I had a cousin with a stack of rock-and-roll records, always spinning the stuff. I clearly recall hearing the Everly Brothers for the first time—being confounded because I thought these "brothers" were girls, because they were singing in such a high register. I never heard men sing like that. But I was in love with high harmonies from that day forward.

Those were probably the first strains of music that came in. Elvis didn't arrive on my shores for a while. There was controversy in our house about Elvis Presley. The ladies would all giggle. And it was not a joke, not to everyone. There were some sort of hushed tones about it. No better advertisement to get a young fellow interested, really.

MEMPHIS, LIVERPOOL, GAINESVILLE

Tom Petty: My aunt was married to a really nice guy, a fellow who worked in the film business in Gainesville. From time to time, if there was a feature film being shot anywhere nearby, he would get on a film crew. So my aunt pulls in the drive one day and says, "Listen, Elvis Presley is making a movie in Ocala, and your uncle is working on the picture."

It looked like the Fourth of July parade was in town, just the biggest ordeal I had seen in my young life. Elvis hadn't arrived yet. Then, suddenly, white Cadillacs begin to appear. White, not black, not red—white Cadillacs. Out of every Cadillac, it seems, comes a guy with a pompadour and a mohair suit. Amazing-looking

Lipham's Music was the hub of all of the musician activity in Gainesville. Everyone went there. Lipham's had all the right equipment, all the great guitars and amps. I remember times when I was really young looking at the guitars in the window and just thinking they might as well be rocket ships. They were the most high-tech thing I'd ever seen. Especially the whammy bar. I thought it was some kind of gear shift. It was all way out of my league financially. I was fourteen or fifteen when they gave me a job there because I was around all the time anyway. The manager said he'd put me on commission. But I sold so much stuff in the first week he took me off commission and gave me a part-time job. I'd offer some incredible bargains that the management wasn't too happy with. My theory was just keep slashing the price until the customer bought it. I didn't realize that this wasn't going to go down so well with the owners.

OPPOSITE:

The Epics, circa 1966. From left: Rodney Rucker, Ricky Rucker, Tom, Dickie Underwood.

PREVIOUS PAGE:

Tom playing bass with the Sundowners, 1965.

guys. And I go, "Is that Elvis?" And my aunt goes, "No, that's not Elvis." "Well, is this one Elvis?" I ask. "No. That's not Elvis." And then suddenly she goes, "That's Elvis."

Bruce Petty: At that age we were into cowboys and Indians. We were hoping to get a new gun and holster for Christmas or whatever. But all of a sudden Tom's whole focus changed.

Bill Flanagan: I think that Elvis Presley affected Tom Petty's imagination and gave him entrée into this mythical world of old singles in a shoe box. But it was seeing the Beatles on *Ed Sullivan* that made him actually see a way that he could do it.

Mike Campbell: When the Beatles happened, the next day at school it's like everything had changed.

Tom Petty: There were four guys, and they looked like they were friends. They were playing their instruments and singing. Now you need to remember, the people that the industry was selling us at the time were the Frankie Avalons, Fabians, and Tab Hunters. These guys didn't really have rock groups. Because of them, I imagined that pop stars traveled around with an orchestra and could make music happen on the beach. Magically, the bushes transform into a backing group. When you saw the Beatles, it was very clear that this was something that could happen in the real world. meaning, hey, I could do this. Here is a way out. So, I instantly wanted a guitar. And my dad, bless his heart, threw down $35 and bought me an electric guitar. Probably because I just wouldn't shut up about it. I was in heaven—but I couldn't play a note.

My mom found me a guitar teacher. The teacher showed me one chord. I went home and played it to death. Then I went back the next time. He told me to put my thumb on the back of the neck of the guitar—not to let it go over the fret board, but to keep it on the back the way classical musicians play. As it happened, the Beatles were on TV again that week. They had their thumbs over the fret board. I didn't go back for another lesson.

Jim Lenehan: In those days, longhairs all gravitated toward each other.

Tom Petty: Soon enough, I met another guy with long hair. He played the drums. Next thing you know, we're banging away, the two of us. His drums sort of drowned out my amplifier. I don't think he really knew—or cared—if I could play or not, but I had made a friend. I had an ally now. So, fast-forward a little bit. I'm at the dance hall on Friday night, and the hottest chick in school—you know, the one we all wanted to talk to for some reason—comes up to me.

Bruce Petty: He wasn't very athletic.

Tom Petty: I was not your typical ladies' man. I was a skinny little kid with a weird haircut. But she is talking to me and says, "You're growing your hair, I see." I said "Yeah, I've got a band." And she hires us to play the intermission at her school dance. We struck gold. Word got out, and we found this kid who had already graduated from high school, a bit older than us, and he played the shit out of a guitar. We went to my house, everyone plugged into the same amplifier, and, wham, the heavens split open. It was the biggest rush in my life. We're doing it. We're making this music. Come show day, we got really nervous, showing up to the gig in matching blue shirts. We put our gear up, and the disc jockey took his break. Without even a name for the group, we started to play. We played our three songs. And to our near disbelief, everyone yelled for more. So we played them again.

Eventually we graduated to nice pink jackets with belts on the back. We played frat houses, high school dances, teen clubs, public swimming pools. We called ourselves the Sundowners. The first time we got paid, my mom really thought that I had stolen the money.

THE EPICS

Tom Petty: As happens in bands, the Sundowners experienced a little internal friction. I had a falling out with the drummer. I was quickly offered a job playing bass with a local group called the Epics, older guys. They had driver's licenses—this was the big time. These guys were wild. At about fifteen years old, I was by far the youngest one in the band. I just looked with wonder at what I was seeing, at the girls in particular. These guys were landing babes and getting drunk. It was some heady stuff for a young fellow.

Tom Leadon: When I was in eighth grade a friend took me to Petty's house, and they were there playing. They had the colored lights and the drum riser and everything in this little room. I was quite impressed.

Tom Petty: Even when I was first learning the guitar I tried to come up with my own tunes, likely because I didn't know that many proper songs. I liked to move the chords around and create my own little melodies. Our idols were Lennon and McCartney, people who wrote their own music. So I wanted to figure out how to do that.

Tom Leadon: Right away he was writing good stuff.

Tom Petty: I would take songs to the band, and they would say great. But we didn't get a lot of reaction when we played them in the shows. The Epics just wanted the crowd to dance. It was probably around 1967, when I was seventeen, that a few of us made the decision to play original music and take the punishment related to that—fewer gigs and so forth. A new sensibility was springing up because of hippies—there was more of an audience for hearing originals. That's when Mudcrutch found its way into the world.

ABOVE:

The Epics in 1967.

From left: Tom, Rodney Rucker, Dickie Underwood, Ricky Rucker, Tom Leadon.

475 4902

I

1. Good Golly Miss Molly
2. SiX dAys on the Road
3 Lookin out my back door
4 Sookie Sookie
5 Steve Miller
6 Ride CAPTAIN
7 OO Wee
8 Everely BROS
9 Proud MARY
10. MA belene

1. Lawdy Mama
2. get warrti
3. OOO ee
4. Something good
5. Fiery Fool

II

1 Johnny B. Goode
2 Somethin good at last
3 Honkey Tonk Women
4 BORN to Be Wild
5 Long Winding Road
6 Rip it Up
7 TAke me BACK
8 Los Angeles
9 City Blocks & Country Miles
10 CAuse is Uderstood

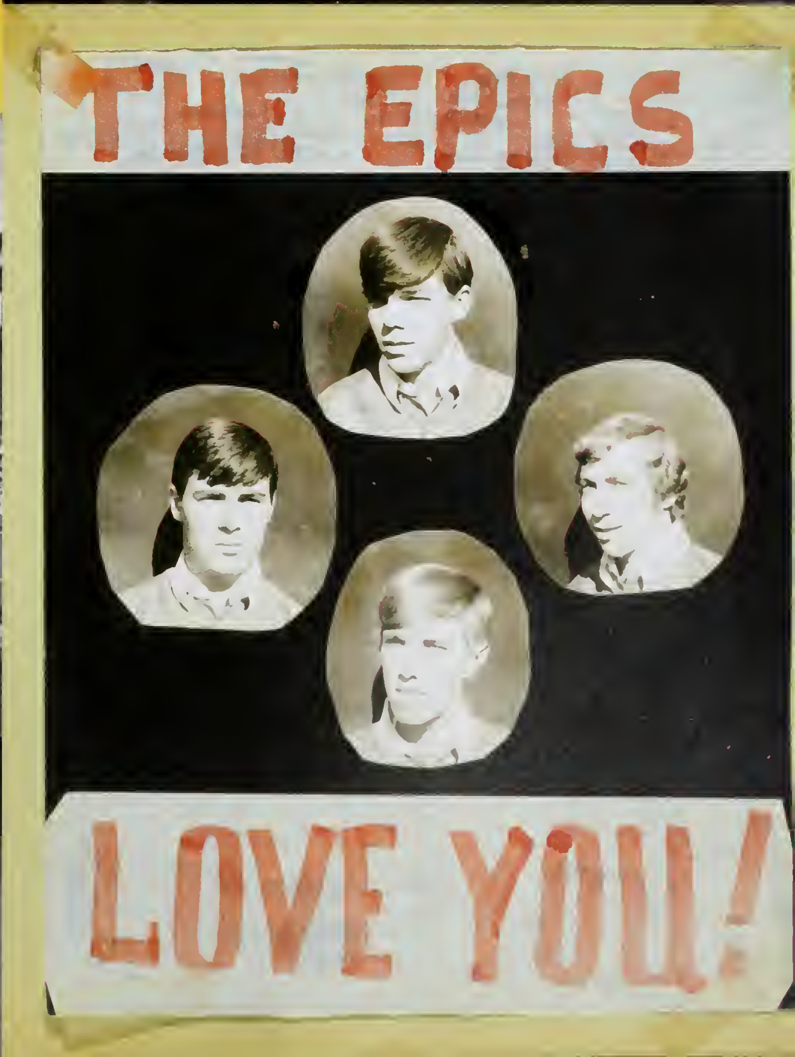
III

1. HARD Headed Woman
2. She caught the Katie
3. Hey LAwdy mama
4 get me out of this
5. Empty Bottle
6. Little Wing
7 Miss Ann
8 Whisky girl
9 You don't have to
10. good golly molly

IV

1 Sookie Sookie
2 Lookin out my Back Door
3
4
5. One More Fiery Fool
6
7
8 SAve your WAter
9
10

ROSE COMMUNITY
IS BACK!
Friday & Saturday, Mar. 3-4
GAINESVILLES
No. 1
BOOGIE
BAND
AND INTRODUCING AT THE FRIDAY SHOW
RAREBIRD
ROCK-ROLL
SANTA FE
JUNIOR COLLEGE
AUDITORIUM-WEST CAMPUS 723 W. UNIV
AROUND CORNER FROM THE
SUBTERRANEAN CIRCUS
SHOWTIME 8 P.M. ADMISSION-$1


THE EPICS
LOVE YOU!

ABOVE:

Living room in Tench family residence set up for Mudcrutch rehearsal. At 6 P.M. the band would break so that Benmont's father could watch the news.

RIGHT:

Mudcrutch Farm Festival, 1971.

PREVIOUS PAGE:

Tom's first meeting with Mike, 1970.

It was Mike's idea to throw the Mudcrutch Farm Festivals. We figured, really casually, that we'd put on an outdoor show. We put up a few posters and had another group join us. It was just going to be on Sunday—"after church," as Jim Lenehan wrote on the poster—and quite a few people came. It was more than we had ever imagined, over a thousand people. The police turned up, a sure sign of success. It went so well we thought we'd have another one.

The next one we had was just off the map. Cars were parked for miles. After that one, we were kicked off of Mudcrutch Farm. The landlord told us we were being evicted. So, of course, we thought, "Why not have a third one?"

Our name became something of a brand, simply because the event was called the Mudcrutch Farm Festival. After that we were in high demand around town.

MUDCRUTCH

Tom Petty: When I left the Epics, Tom Leadon came with me. Like me, Tom was a teenager who wanted to play originals. The new group's lead singer was Jim Lenehan. Now we needed a name.

Jim Lenehan: Ricky Rucker walked in one day and said, "What do you think of Mudcrutch?" And Petty said, "In relation to what?"

Tom Leadon: The name "the Epics" had become dated. This was the era of the Jefferson Airplane, Moby Grape, the Grateful Dead. And we were called the Epics. Mudcrutch sounded like something adults and straight people wouldn't understand or approve of.

Tom Petty: I was playing the bass. Tom Leadon was playing the guitar. Needing another guitar player and a drummer, we posted an ad at Lipham's Music Store. We got a call from a fellow named Randall Marsh. Randall lived in this rundown farmhouse on three or four acres of land. We went out there to try him out for the band. As we were setting up, somebody made the remark that it's a shame we don't have a rhythm guitar player. Randall says, "Oh, I may have a rhythm guitar player here." And I heard him yell, "Mike, can you play rhythm guitar?"

Mike Campbell: I was just in the back room, listening through the walls.

Tom Petty: Mike's wearing cut-off jeans, which I have never seen him wear since. His hair was fairly short for those days because he had a job at the university library. And he's carrying this $80 Japanese guitar. At that point we all kind of looked at the ground. This guy is bound to be terrible.

Tom Leadon: . . . a toy guitar, worth about ten bucks maybe.

Jim Lenehan: . . . worst guitar I've ever seen. Looked like it was cut out of a door.

Tom Petty: But, one "Johnny B. Goode" later we had a band. Our jaws dropped. This was an incredible guitar player. One snag: Mike is going to college. He seems to be enrolled in the University of Florida. I said to him, "You know, you don't want to do that. Why would you want to do that when you can play the guitar like this?" I can't believe now that I had that much gumption, but I talked him into quitting school. His next concern was, well, what about the army? Vietnam was going on, and you got a deferment if you went to school. I said, "Don't worry, we'll handle that."

DUB'S

Tom Petty: The main club in Gainesville that paid any money was this place called Dub's Steer Room, which later shortened its name to Dub's. The real feature of the place was six topless dancers. Until we were on the stage at Dub's, it hadn't registered to me what topless dancing really was. We went into our first number, and these girls just pulled it off. Nice-looking girls. So we are just playing and watching, and I thought, "I am going to like this professional music thing."

Benmont Tench: After I saw Mudcrutch play in Lake City I became a fan.

Tom Petty: Benmont I knew when he was just a little guy. He couldn't have been more than eleven or twelve when he came into Lipham's one time. Benmont walks in there, sits down, and plays a Beatles album, the entire album, beginning to end. I remember going over and introducing myself and talking to him. He had this weird name, Benmont.

Benmont Tench: If I'm in a music store, I'm going to sit down at the piano until they say stop. And they did. They said, "Kid, enough."

Tom Petty: Years later, I was hanging with this guy who occasionally loaned us his van to move gear. I'm at his place. It's night. The door opens and this guy comes in with an arm full of records. He's got a big, bushy beard and hair down over his shoulders. He's also got all these import records from England. I ask him his name, and he says, "Benmont Tench." I said, "Benmont Tench. You're not the kid that plays the piano?" "Yeah, that's me," he says. "Son of a bitch!" I say. "What are you doing tonight or tomorrow night?" We get him onstage without any rehearsal, and he outplays all of us for five hours.

Ben's dad was a judge. I had to go into his office and talk him into letting his son quit college. One of the more interesting jobs I've ever had. My angle was pretty solid: "Let Ben have a few years of this. And if it doesn't work, he can always go back to college. But he can't always get a record deal and make an album." It was in the judge's living room where we recorded the demos that really got it all started for the band. We cut six or seven songs on a two-track mobile unit at Benmont's house. We thought it sounded pretty good. The next step was to make my first trip to L.A.

DOOR-TO-DOOR SALESMEN

Tom Petty: It was a different time in the music business. Three of us went out to visit the record companies. We packed up a lot of sandwiches and

Jim Lenehan [second from left] was the original lead singer of Mudcrutch. He and I go all the way back to high school. Though I was the one who replaced Jim, it wasn't anything like a competition between us. In fact, he was the first really encouraging person I met when I started writing songs. He prompted me to keep doing it. That meant a lot. I think his leaving the group was twofold. On one level, it was getting to where I was writing more and more songs and it just made more sense that I sang them. But he also wanted to go back to school and get a degree in theater arts. He learned about building sets and lighting and staging. So it wasn't long before Lenehan was back—and wanted to light everything. He did it with the most modest lights in the world.

Thirty years later, he's still with us. He's been in show business since he was five, singing on the radio in Gainesville. He instilled a professionalism in us. Even early on he felt that, no matter our resources, our shows should always have good lights and good sound. And to this day, he's still doing that job. He'll still walk up at rehearsal for a television show and go, "You're gonna wear that?"

LEFT:

Mudcrutch in 1970. From left: Tom Leadon, Jim Lenehan, Tom, Randall Marsh, Mike Campbell.

BELOW:

First Mudcrutch single, 1971.

tapes. None of us had been west of the Mississippi. It was a big deal when we started seeing cactus on the side of the road.

Bruce Petty: I remember him sending pictures of cactuses.

Tom Petty: Once we're out there, we drive into Hollywood, down Sunset Boulevard. There were lots of record companies in those days. I said, "Well, this is going to be easy because we will just go to every one. One of them will have to take us."

We walk in—and we must have looked pretty funny, having just driven three thousand miles—and we are quickly told that it's not done this way. We look at the fellow who tells us this and say, "C'mon, we're here and we got the demo and you have a tape deck." He played not quite thirty seconds and stopped the tape, telling us he'd heard enough and to get out of his office.

Change of strategy. Kind of. I had a list of record companies I took from record ads in *Rolling Stone*. I figured we'd make some appointments. I go out to the phone booth, and while I'm on the phone and asking for a number, I look down at the bottom of the booth and there's a piece of paper lying there. On this paper there are twenty-five record companies and their phone numbers. That made me feel good and bad. "Christ," I thought, "how many people are doing this?"

I made an appointment for later in the day to visit Shelter Records. And we went to MGM. At MGM a guy listens to the whole tape. He says, "Who's your lawyer?" We have no lawyer. He says, "Who's your manager?" I point at Keith, the roadie, and say, "I guess he is." The guy says he wants to make a deal to record a single! Our eyes go up. But we're savvy now, right? We said, well, we were really looking for an album deal. We hit the street just leaping in the air. Later we drop a tape at Shelter for Denny Cordell.

The next day we go to London Records. A cute little secretary is in the waiting room, talks to us for a few minutes, and eventually tells us someone will see us. This guy plays our tape, the whole thing. He starts clapping his hands and jumping around going, "This is fantastic. You got a deal." We just looked at him. A deal? He wants to know where we live? Gainesville, Florida. Where? What? What's that? "You're going to have to live here," he tells us. "Go get your band."

CONVOY

Tom Petty: On the way back to Gainesville we swung through New Orleans, went up to Ben's place, and said, "Look. This is it with school. Get your gear. We're going to make records." We started selling anything we owned of value, which wasn't much. One thing we were selling was an old car. We're rehearsing one day, and the phone rings. I put down my bass and go to answer the phone. The band is still playing in the next room. It's loud. I think this person is calling about the car. Talking over the music, I'm saying, "Well, you know, it's a hundred bucks. It's not that good." The voice on the other end goes, "No, no, no. This is Denny Cordell. I'm calling for Mudcrutch."

When I told Denny that we'd promised a guy at London that we're going to do it with them, he asked if we'd signed the deal. Well, no. Then he says that if we're going to L.A., it's not too far out of our way to stop in Tulsa. We should meet him there and talk a little bit before we sign with London Records.

Denny Cordell: I completely flipped for the whole thing, contacted Tom, and he said he was driving across with his band to various record companies in California. I was desperate, frightened I wouldn't have a chance of getting them. Really, the Tulsa trip was an effort to head them off at the pass.

Tom Petty: We load up everybody and their girls, and a couple of dogs, into three vehicles, including a truck that did fifty miles an hour tops and Benmont's mother's station wagon, which constantly broke down. I got married a couple of days before we hit the road. So we're off on an adventure—on every level.

Jim Lenehan: I have a little piece of silent Super 8 of the wedding. A couple days later we left in a caravan. A truck, a Volkswagen van, and Benmont's station wagon.

Randall Marsh: . . . five cars and a truck.

Mike Campbell: We all got a truck and headed out together.

Benmont Tench: . . . a U-Haul truck, a Volkswagen bus, and maybe something else.

THE PIRATE

Tom Petty: Once in Oklahoma, I remember meeting Denny Cordell in front of the Shelter Studio, which was built in an old church. There was a windstorm, dust blowing everywhere. Through the dust clouds steps this Englishman, who was really something to take in. He had the earring, which you didn't see a lot back then, and a bandana. Some kind of English dustbowl pirate. "Come on over to the diner," he tells us. We immediately hit it off. He tells us we're the greatest thing since the Rolling Stones and that he's going to throw everything he can behind the band. Tells us to go on out to Hollywood and go to his office. Ask for Eileen Basich.

He reaches in his pocket and pulls out a lot of cash, tells us we're going to need some money. He throws it down on the table. There's five grand there. "Will that get you to Hollywood?" I'd never seen that much money in one hand, and definitely not my own.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:

Tom, 1970.

Mike, 1970.

Benmont, early '70s

Mike and Tom playing at Mudcrutch Farm, 1971

Eileen Basich: There were ten of them. There were so many, and they were so young and excited.

Tom Petty: Within a day or so Shelter Records rented us out a couple of houses, one with a swimming pool. This is heavy stuff for us. We hadn't hardly seen a house with a swimming pool, let alone lived in one. There was no furniture, of course, but we bought lawn chairs so we could sit down. About the second week we were there I learned that I was going to have a baby. It was strange. I didn't quite know what to think. There was so much happening in my life. I just thought, "Well, okay. At least I've got a job now."

I remember Benmont being particularly crazy around this time. He wouldn't let us turn the heat on in the house because he was afraid that the gas was going to blow it up, figured we didn't know how to operate it properly. You have to realize that Benmont didn't even own a pair of blue jeans at this point in his life because he had always been dressed in prep school clothes. He wore blazers all the time.

Benmont Tench: I felt like an alien in this band, anyway, because I was younger than anyone by a couple of years. They were guys that had been in this rock-and-roll band and living on this farm and God knows what kind of stuff. I had been in boarding school in New England. Good lord, it wasn't the same thing. My dad is a judge.

Tom Petty: So, Adria is born. Benmont's wearing jeans. And Denny Cordell figures he's going to teach us how to record. He's going to show us how to trick the mic into doing what we want it to. We learned a lot. He sent us back to Oklahoma for a stint in Shelter's studio, and we also worked in L.A. studios. After what seemed to us like a very, very long time, often waiting for Denny, a Mudcrutch single was released. One side was "Depot Street," and the other was "Wild Eyes," both written by me. It was an overwhelming flop, hit the dirt pretty hard.

We had so many expectations in that time—and then to watch the single disappear. Amidst it all, Mudcrutch breaks up. I went immediately to Mike and said, "You won't leave me though, right? We're going to stick together, right?" It was a hard time. It was really sad because we had been together so long. I felt really terrible about it.

Not much happened for a while. I was still under contract to Shelter and did a couple of sessions as a solo artist, with the best session musicians in town, Jim Keltner, Al Kooper, Jim Gordon. But I didn't like it. I didn't like the feeling of *not* being in a group. I never really wanted it to be that way. I went to Cordell and said, "This is not what I want to do. I really would like to have my own group."

Tom Leadon, Tom Petty, Randall Marsh, Mike Campbell.

Chapter Two/ Tom Petty and the King Bees

I walk in, and I'm sitting in the control room listening to this band play. They sound fantastic. They haven't seen me yet. And I thought, "Whoa, this is it. I have to steal this band." That was my first thought, that this should be my band. God bless Ben for forgiving my subversive intentions. If I hadn't pulled in to do a harmonica overdub, I would have missed the Heartbreakers. That was a pretty big chunk of luck right there.

STEAL THIS BAND

Benmont Tench: I was having a great adventure of being broke.

Tom Petty: About a year after Mudcrutch split up, Benmont, who'd had his own ups and downs being in L.A., was thinking about making a solo record. He was cutting at this place called the Village Recorder, and he called me—asking if I'd play harmonica on his demo. I went down, and there Benmont had assembled in the studio what was essentially the Heartbreakers. He's got Mike Campbell on guitar. There were Stan Lynch and Ron Blair, Gainesville guys transplanted to L.A. He even had Randall Marsh, the Mudcrutch drummer. I walk in, and I'm sitting in the control room listening to this band play. They sound fantastic. They haven't seen me yet. And I thought, "Whoa, this is it. I have to steal this band." That was my first thought, that this should be my band. God bless Ben for forgiving my subversive intentions. If I hadn't pulled in to do a harmonica overdub, I would have missed the Heartbreakers. That was a pretty big chunk of luck right there.

Mike Campbell: It was really Ben's session that put everyone in the room at the same time.

Tom Petty: Even though Mudcrutch had broken up, Shelter Records hadn't released me, hoping I'd make a solo record. The band comes in on a break, and I started my pitch: "You know, you all could throw in with me. I've got a record deal. You wouldn't have to go searching around again trying to get something together. Isn't this the way it's supposed to be?" I tell them that this time I'm going to be the leader of the band—because I'd been with Mudcrutch and come out with nothing, and if I'm going to put all of my effort into this, I want something out of it. And they were up for it. They said it sounds good. Let's try it. I went to Denny Cordell and said I got these friends from Gainesville. Of course, he pretty much knew everyone already.

Enter Stan Lynch. I think he was a little skeptical at first, but that changed. Understand that Randall Marsh was on that demo session of Benmont's, but I felt like I didn't want to go back down that road again. Stan, though, here was something new. Stan had a really big personality. Radiant. He became a great cheerleader and team leader. And—this was important—he was really hungry and wanted to do this thing. All that and he was a great drummer. With Stan I was spoiled for life because he's really a locomotive back there. When he finished playing there would be a pile of sawdust around the drum kit. He kept everyone up, kept everyone laughing.

Ron Blair: Next thing you know we're writing names on a blackboard.

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Tom Petty: We decided that we would be a group and needed a name. My choice was the King Bees. The guys didn't much like that. I thought it sounded good—you know, Tom Petty and the King Bees. Where the Heartbreakers came from I'm not sure. It was probably Denny Cordell.

Denny Cordell: Really? I must have nicked it off Johnny Thunders in that case.

Benmont Tench: Cordell and Petty came up with the Heartbreakers. Kind of funny and ironic, isn't it? Heartbreakers? Who are we kidding here?

Tom Petty: The band thought the name had a good ring to it. Later on we were really shocked because there was a band called the Heartbreakers. They were fairly big in New York. But we thought, "We're not changing our name just because of this other group." They thought the same thing. We figured we'd watch and see who wins this contest.

ENGINEERS ON LSD

Tom Petty: By this time Shelter Records had built a studio in L.A., right next door to the office. They let us rehearse in the studio, and we could record when we wanted. That's the moment when we really started to make what I think was pretty damn good music. In that Shelter Studio we did some growing up that stayed with us for a long time.

Denny Cordell fronted us some money to buy gear, so we picked up several Vox amplifiers that we still use today. I'd been writing songs all the while. The band was really locked in, ready for anything I threw at them. Things were starting to get pretty exciting around that time.

Mike Campbell: He was coming out as this amazing writer.

Tom Petty: The folks at Shelter found us two really good engineers, absolutely insane but really good engineers. As people these guys were nice, but no question that they were whack. They took LSD every day. Every day. One's name was Noah Shark and the other one just went by Max. Max was Noah's lieutenant. Noah and Max would get out of bed, swallow some acid, and go, "Alright, let's make a record." Counterintuitive though it may be, they were actually pretty good at what they did.

Benmont Tench: Noah mixed a record by taking a strobe light, flashing it into your eyes so that's all you could see—and then you mix the record. [He'd say,] "We want the cymbals to sound like they're chasing the snare drum, like the bass drum is a big queen grape and the cymbals are mice scurrying after the elephant."

Denny Cordell: They were permanently tripping.

Tom Petty: Cordell would come in and out, in and out, checking to see how it was going. His comments were pretty meat-and-potatoes: "This is good." "You should re-record this." But, for the most part, he actually wasn't there that much. Cordell was a song guy. He taught me so much. His production came in many forms, a lot of them not in the studio. He'd sit me down with records, like— "Alright, let's see. We've got Lloyd Price today. Listen to this, this is Specialty Records out of Los Angeles." There's no manual for what a producer does or doesn't do. I've seen all kinds. Denny's approach often left us to our own devices in the studio. But he was still key. This is when we recorded "American Girl" and "Breakdown," some of the first hits we ever had.

ABOVE:

Benmont, circo 1976.

Ston ond Tony Dimitriodes, Sonto Monico Civic, 1978.

OPPOSITE:

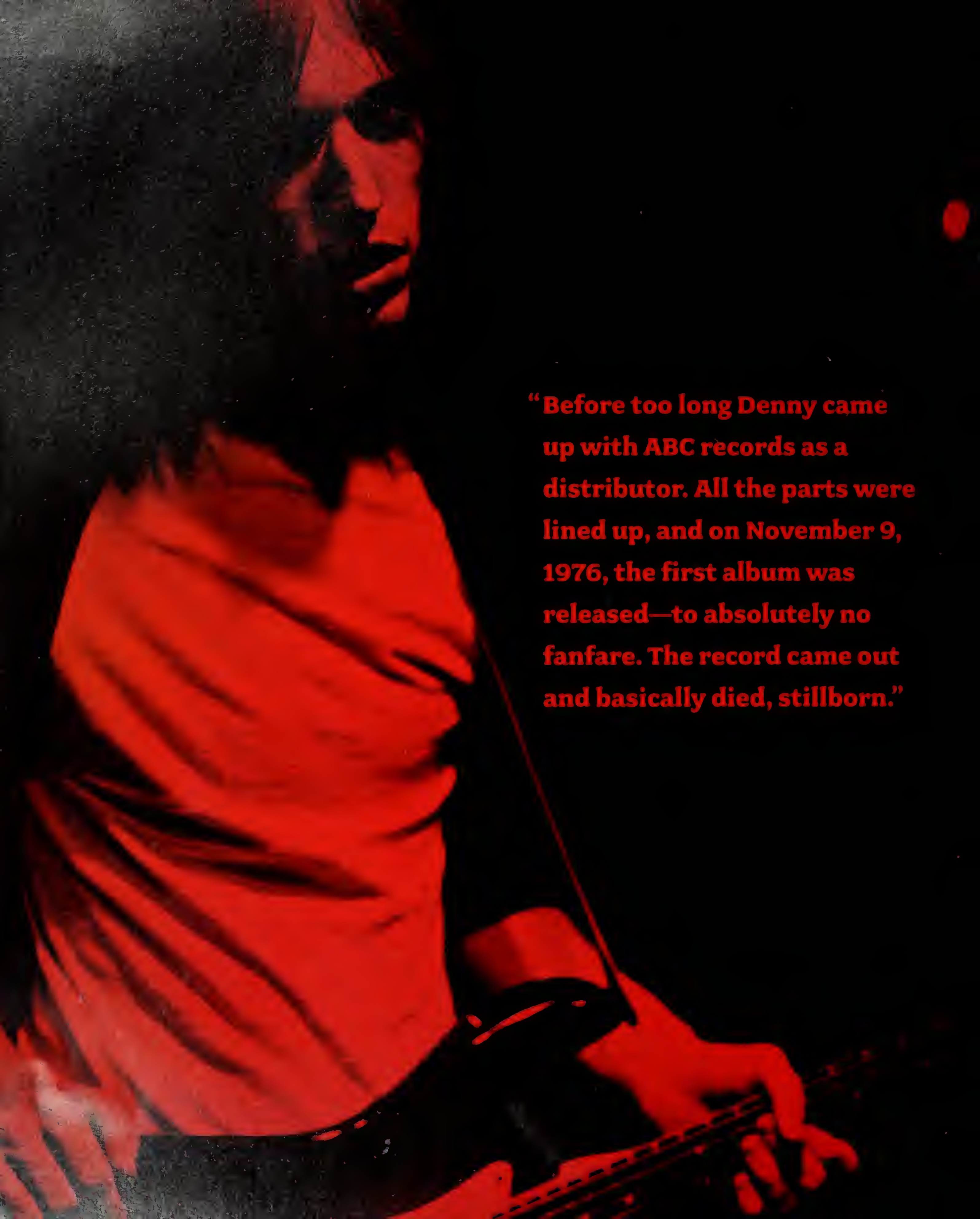
Benmont, circo 1976.

Shelter Records really was a kind of family scene. They had nothing to do with the way most of Hollywood was working at that time. We hung out at Shelter most every day. We'd go down to the grocery store on the corner and get a sandwich, just sit around there every day, in a bad part of town, too. We'd move between the office and the studio. That's where we'd figure out what the night's entertainment was going to be. This photograph was taken at one of the Shelter barbeques.

Because the label was a cool place, on any given day people were stopping by that weren't even Shelter artists. Musicians that had worked with them on this or that project would just drop in. We used to see Freddie King there, J.J. Cale. One day Georgie Fame might be in the studio.

Meeting George Harrison was another Shelter-related thing. Since I was signed to the label's publishing company and Leon Russell [Shelter Records co-owner] was a fan of my work, I would occasionally do some writing with Leon. He had called me one day and said, "I'd really like somebody to help me with lyrics on my next record." I'd go over to his studio, and sometimes we might write some lyrics and a lot of times we wouldn't. It was at Leon's studio that I met Ringo and George, who were both playing the session that day.

Benmont, Tom, Stan, Ron at Shelter Records Picnic, Malibu, 1976.



"Before too long Denny came up with ABC records as a distributor. All the parts were lined up, and on November 9, 1976, the first album was released—to absolutely no fanfare. The record came out and basically died, stillborn."

Tony Dimitriades: Denny Cordell helped Tom get this huge education about where it all came from. How rock and roll evolved. Which artists meant something and which ones didn't—which ones were the pretenders and which were the real thing.

Mike Campbell: "Rockin' Around (With You)" was the first song Tom and I ever wrote together, and he wrote most of it. I was just playing a little guitar riff. He goes, "That's cool. Make me a tape." He came back the next day and had put this whole song to it. I was pretty blown away by that. I was like, "Wow! Thanks guy. Let me write some more of those."

Benmont Tench: "Hometown Blues" is Mudcrutch with Duck Dunn from Booker T. and the MGs on bass. "Strangered In The Night" is from Tom's solo record. The rest of it is Heartbreakers.

Tom Petty: The first album feels like it took a long time to complete. I think that's because it had been a long time coming. It really didn't take that long once we were in the pocket. When the album got finished it was very exciting. Unfortunately, at this very moment the record company came to odds with MCA, their distributor. Denny Cordell and Leon Russell had some kind of falling out, ultimately splitting up their partnership. That left Cordell needing a new distributor for Shelter product, meaning us. So we sat waiting, feeling really discouraged.

Eileen Basich: Denny and Leon had their divorce, as such. That caused a lot of problems. For at least a year they couldn't release a record.

Tom Petty: Before too long Denny came up with ABC records as a distributor. All the parts were lined up, and on November 9, 1976, the first album was released—to absolutely no fanfare. The record came out and basically died, stillborn.

Benmont Tench: Our hometown paper said, Don't waste your time on this crap. Go buy the new Grand Funk record.

Tom Petty: But the story didn't end there. You need to remember that radio was very different in that time. There were stations in local markets that had a significant measure of autonomy, that weren't governed by a playlist generated off-premises. To our great surprise, a month or two later, our record starts to get some play in San Francisco and Boston. In fact, it started to get a lot of play. After the initial disappointment, I remember feeling like maybe, just maybe, a dream was starting to come true. It was just two markets playing the record—but they were key markets, music-lover markets. Then, like a bolt of lightning, Bam! —the record hits in England.

ABOVE:
Denny Cordell, circa 1970.

GOLD, MINED THE HARD WAY

Tom Petty: The record comes out in England, and it's an enormous success right out of the box. They're writing whole-page reviews and just going mad for it. But before we head over there, we need to play some dates in the States. Al Kooper, known for starting Blood, Sweat & Tears and playing with Bob Dylan but familiar to me from the solo sessions I did, invited us to open his club tour on the East Coast. We accepted.

We needed a manager and a road crew. Every manager in Los Angeles turns us down. No interest whatsoever. Denny Cordell finds a guy, this crazy Englishman named Reggie Locke, who was a friend of his and also Joe Cocker's manager. Reggie came down the studio, loved what he heard, thought that we were the greatest thing since sliced bread. Do I have to tell you that he got the job?

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Complete History

CASH BOX

"To our great surprise, a month or two later, our record starts to get some play in San Francisco and Boston. In fact, it started to get a lot of play. After the initial disappointment, I remember feeling like maybe, just maybe, a dream was starting to come true. It was just two markets playing the record—but they were key markets, music-lover markets. Then, like a bolt of lightning, Bam!—the record hits in England."

Tony Dimitriades: Denny Cordell played Reggie and me some of the album. It had "American Girl" and "Breakdown." We stepped into something really good and became the managers of the group. Reggie went on the road while I stayed home and took care of business.

Tom Petty: Reggie was a great cheerleader, made us feel like a unit. He fit right into the Heartbreakers-against-the-world mindset. Even if we were going onstage in the littlest shithole bar in Florida, he made us feel like it was Madison Square Garden. It was an attitude that was good for us, and one that we kept. In Reggie's view, every night mattered. We got this tour with Al Kooper that was named after Al's current release, the Act Like Nothing's Wrong Tour. The name couldn't have been more perfect, because no one came out to see the shows. Reggie's philosophy that every night mattered got its most rigorous test on the Act Like Nothing's Wrong Tour.

Immediately before the Al Kooper tour, we did a few club shows in south Florida and opened for Kiss in South Carolina. This was a time when no one knew who we were, so why not have us open for Kiss? But the band was cooking. We'd assembled a crew comprised of Bugs Weidel and Jim Lenehan, former lead singer of Mudcrutch, both of whom are still with the Heartbreakers today.

Jim Lenehan: The first arena was with Kiss. Nobody in the audience had a clue who Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers were. But they would go out there like they were the headliners. They would demand that people pay attention. And they did it. Boy, it worked.

Tom Petty: When we hit Boston, where our record was being played a lot, it was a really good feeling. I think it was the fourth night of the tour when we recorded a live broadcast that went out over WBCN in Boston. That recording was bootlegged—*Live at Paul's Mall*. I listened to it not long ago, and you hear this big crescendo of music followed by a handful of people clapping. There's nobody there. Things came slowly for us. Level by level. When we finished out that tour, it was time to go to England.

THE FIRST TIME YOU FEEL IT

Tom Petty: We went to England as an opening act for Nils Lofgren. From the moment we got off the plane, there were journalists to meet us, photographers taking our photos. We were on the covers of the weekly music magazines. This was big time for us. We were impressed. None of us had ever been to England, but all of us viewed it as a mecca. In our minds, this is where all of that music came from—Beatles, Stones, Animals, Yardbirds, Kinks.

We had a single called "Anything That's Rock 'N' Roll." It was never released as a single here, but it was moving up the British charts when we got there. We performed on *Top of the Pops*, the BBC weekly television show that, at least then, governed the charts. The first night of the tour was in Cardiff, Wales.

The label set us up with an English road manager, Mike North, who told us we were going to be traveling by bus. I remember us all standing in the hotel room, looking out the window to see our bus like excited schoolchildren. We don't see it. "Where's the bus?" we ask the road manager. He goes, "Right there," pointing to a little bread truck. In the back it had nothing but two wooden benches. So we sat in this little van, on wooden benches, facing each other, shuttling toward Wales. Then, at that first show the audience went insane. They rush the stage. For us it was the biggest mainline shot of adrenaline you can imagine. At that moment, bread truck or not, we thought, "Hey, we're really going to make it. This is going to work." It was an amazing time. Nothing will ever again feel like it did when it first started to happen. Nothing.

We did some more television, including *The Old Grey Whistle Test*. The more television we did, the more records we were selling in England. When that supporting tour ended, we stayed on in England, this time going out as the headliner. During this time we got to know Reggie Locke's partner, Tony Dimitriades, a bit better. The first thing he did for us was change our London hotel because we thought it looked too much like a dungeon.

Tony Dimitriades: There were some issues with Reggie's use of the money the record company had allocated for touring. It made for a lot of fun for the band, I'm sure, but it also made the money disappear rather quickly. Reggie kept calling me for more tour support. Finally Tom told me that I could be the manager if I would fire Reggie. So I had to fire Reggie.

Tom Petty: The tour winds its way through England, and it also hit Holland, Belgium, France, and Germany along the way. Touring with the Heartbreakers in those days, anything could happen day to day. It was high adventure. Everything was new. Everything was exciting. We were meeting lots of nice foreign ladies and trying to extend as much American hospitality to them as we could. We were thrilled.

Dave Stewart: Tom was probably the only American music that was acceptable in Britain—you know, when he came out with "American Girl."

Tom Petty: Then the tour ended. Next thing you know we're back in L.A. taking out the garbage.

Adria Petty: We were very poor. My parents rented our TV. They were always worried about money.

POP MUSIC REVIEW

S.F. Smitten by Heartbreakers

BY ROBERT HILBURN
Times Pop Music Critic

SAN FRANCISCO—It's only two blocks from the Miyako Hotel to Winterland, where Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers shared the bill Sunday night with Bob Seger. The limousines that Petty's record company, Shelter, ordered were an obvious luxury. But Shelter's Denny Cordell figured a toast was in order.

After 10 years in rock 'n' roll bars and back streets, Petty, 24, could be on the threshold of something big. His growing radio airplay, strong concert response and glowing reviews make him a hot new property in a field whose vitality depends on finding new attractions.

Petty, who drew two standing ovations at Winterland,

TOM PETTY
. . . on the rock road since 15.

Times photo

begins a two-day stand tonight at the Whisky in L.A., then heads for England where one major pop newspaper called his LP the best debut by an American band in 1976.

Petty's album, which sold only 6,500 copies its first three months, has sold seven times that figure in recent weeks. A new single, "American Girl," could mulitply it more.

If so, Petty will be viewed by the rock industry and audience as another one of the lucky, unexplainable "over-

Please Turn to Page 12, Col. 1

Lynch on drums and Benmont Tench on the keyboards. I sing the lead vocals and play guitar and some organ.
What are they like?
Well, you'd probably be upset if one of them took your little sister out. T.P
T.P.
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ST. LOUIS
CHICAGO
BACKSTAGE

WHEN IN DOUBT
WHOP IT OUT

WINTERLAND
Bill Graham's
WINTERLAND
DEC 30
TOM PETTY &
HEARTBREAKERS
GREG KIHN BAND
DEC 31 SOLD OUT

We played the Marquee Club in London in 1978, around the time You're Gonna Get It! *was released. We saw the Marquee as this great shrine. We associated it with bands like the Yardbirds and the Who and all those R&B-based rock bands of the mid-'60s.*

The band thought it would be a fantastic place to play. God, it's a hot and sweaty place. It's very small, and it was really packed. I remember wondering if I was going to pass out from the heat. It certainly felt kind of triumphant, but there was very little oxygen.

We'd just played the Knebworth Festival to 100,000 people. Dealing with that size crowd takes a bit of learning. I think the Marquee show came about because we wanted to balance things out by playing a club. But our show worked in both places. We didn't really have any act except the one we did wherever we went. We did the same show at Knebworth that we did in clubs, and felt really good that it translated.

ABOVE:

Playing the Marquee, London, June 27, 1978.

ABOVE RIGHT:

Mike, circa 1978.

RIGHT:

Tom, circa 1978.

PREVIOUS PAGES:

Recording at the Shelter studio with engineer Max Reese and Stan, 1976.

FOLLOWING PAGES:

Knebworth Festival, Hertfordshire, England, June 24, 1978.

A CHANGE OF HEART

Tom Petty: Coming home was like going from pop stardom to "Welcome back, you really don't mean much in these parts." But, slowly, the press we got in England started to drift back here. The critic at the *L.A. Times*, Robert Hilburn, wrote a very nice review of us. He'd actually written about the album prior to that and given it a so-so review. Then he wrote a second one saying that he was wrong, that our record is actually really great. In a rare and wonderful instance of critical humility—we need all of that we can get, right?—he wrote a second review because he changed his mind. Then he did an interview with me, a nice piece. That got us a weeklong stand at the Whisky. By the time the shows happened, we were seeing lines around the block.

Randall Marsh: I didn't see them for a while, but then they played the Whisky. And it was like I'd never heard anything like that. It was like seeing the Beatles. I just went, "Shit!"

Denny Cordell: I remember when he played the Whisky. It was just . . . it was a red-hot band. The place was packed. They came on and they did everything perfect. That was a day that the tide turned.

Elliot Roberts: I saw them at the Whisky. Tom had the best collection of new songs by a new artist that I had heard up to that point.

Tom Petty: At one of these shows this fellow comes up to me in the dressing room—there wasn't much security in those days—and says, "You ever hear yourself on the radio in L.A.?" Then he said, "Remember my name when you hear yourself on the radio." Jon Scott. Another crank coming out the woodwork, I figured. Two days later I heard us on KROQ. Jon ended up being a key member of the Heartbreaker team. On a handful of stations like KROQ you could hear Elvis Costello, the Talking Heads, Blondie. Punk rock had loosened the ground a bit. As a result, the Heartbreakers were grouped with the acts that were a short, sharp reaction to the big, bloated seven-minute exercises of bullshit that you heard everywhere those days.

You've got to remember, there were other artists our age who still remembered when music was much more vital, who remembered Chuck Berry, James Brown, and the Beatles. Quite a few bands emerged at the time.

Maybe because I had a leather jacket on the cover of the first album, maybe because our songs hovered around three minutes or under, maybe because we had a raw edge to our production—whatever the case, we were labeled as punk rock by a lot of people. This meant that they didn't always listen to what was inside the record jacket. They just said, "Oh, punk rock," and dismissed it. Eventually we started to cross over to the mainstream radio stations. Add to this the fact that ABC was marketing us in funny ways, getting us into teen magazines like *Tiger Beat* and *16*. We did everything we could to discourage that, worked at making sure we weren't cute. Then, to confuse the message further, we were opening up shows for bands like the Doobie Brothers one night and the Ramones the next. But, however odd the formula at the time, the music was cutting through. The music was our passport to a lot of places. By the end of that year we cracked the top forty with "Breakdown." As far as we were concerned, in 1977 we were sitting on top of the world.

Jackson Browne: I don't think anybody knew exactly what they were.

Dave Grohl: What I love about Tom Petty is that he was so hard to get a hold of. He was like a fish slipping out of your hands. Like wait a second, is he . . . they're a rock band, right? Yeah, but they wear those skinny ties . . . they're not new wave, are they? But he kind of screams like a punk sometimes. A blues band? You couldn't really tell because their range was so wide and the songwriting was so unique. I can't think of any band that sounds like Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers. He's just a bad ass. All of us loved him.

WANTED:
SONGS FOR YOUNG ROCK-AND-ROLL BAND

Tom Petty: The second album dilemma is that you have most of your young life to write the first album and a year or less for the second. Add to that the fact that there's pressure to show the world that the first wasn't a fluke. I'd kept writing even after the first album was done. I was pretty vigilant in that respect. So we had some of the material ready when we went in to do the second album, and we made it really quickly. It went on to sell more than the first one, but, honestly, we didn't really need to have a new album out when we brought it out. Because the first one had been a sleeper hit—it took a good year for the first one to really saturate the marketplace—there was no rush. But what can you do with young men on an adventure who want fresh material for their live shows, right? We weren't businessmen, at least not yet. We were a rock-and-roll band.

You're Gonna Get It! marks the first time I took a production credit. I guess I realized that I was already doing the job of a producer in some respect. Cordell told me that any artist worth his salt is a coproducer. That made me think, "Well, okay, then I'm coproducer." For the first album I wouldn't have dared assume the title because I didn't know a thing about making records. By the second one, however, we'd spent more time in the studio, and Cordell was actually there less than he was on the first album. It was more like he'd come in every week and sum up what we were doing. He was definitely involved in the material. But for the day-to-day, it was me and the engineer, Noah Shark, and, of course, Mike was quite helpful. We were experimenting with sounds a little more on that record. It's a funny little record. Very short because we wanted the songs themselves to be short. I like it when I hear it.

OPPOSITE:

San Francisco, 1978. Mobbed at Winterland.

FOLLOWING PAGES:

The Heartbreakers on their first day in England, 1977.

Bill Flanagan: You listen to "No Second Thoughts" and you realize that that impulse of Tom's, that very artistic impulse, was always there along with the meat-and-potatoes rock and roll.

Tom Petty: We went in and worked good six-day weeks, and it was done before you knew it. There's a song called "Hurt" that has always been one of my favorites. That's where we first learned about loops; about how to make a tape loop. We did a percussion track where we're all playing percussion and then we had the loop going. We cut the track playing to this percussion loop. We were really pleased with that one. It was that kind of record. Lots of experimentation. We used a loop on another track, in fact. Maybe it was "Baby's A Rock 'N Roller." We did a lot of sound effects and were squishing vocals with compression and putting whatever else we could on them. A lot of tape delay. There's another good song on there, "No Second Thoughts," another one where we made a tape with percussion and played along with the tape. "I Need To Know" and "Listen To Her Heart" are on that record and became Heartbreaker staples.

"I Need To Know" was based on Wilson Pickett's "Land Of 1,000 Dances." I was trying to do something like that, though I clearly couldn't do anything like that—but that's what I was thinking of and it came out like "I Need To Know." That's how we were at the time. We were listening to anything we could get our hands on. It was a great educational phase. Because we were on a big record label, all of a sudden we got free records. So many records at our disposal. I could go down to Shelter and say, "God, you know, I really want to hear Wilson Pickett." And Cordell would give me ten Wilson Pickett records. He'd just order them and give them to me.

We were at a feast, listening to things we hadn't been able to hear because we didn't have the money. I got really caught up in wanting to write songs like what I was hearing, wanting to capture the feel of what I was hearing. It was really helpful. Just like "I Need To Know" was in a Wilson Pickett bag, "Listen To Her Heart" was really like a Searchers kind of song. It was a gumbo. What was going on in our heads then is we were trying to get every record we ever liked into what we were doing. That will always make something interesting. There are some out-there tracks. It's almost a little psychedelic at times.

After we finished *You're Gonna Get It!*, I got a letter from Elliot Roberts, who managed Neil Young and Joni Mitchell, and later the Cars and Devo. We were still running Heartbreaker business out of Tony's bedroom, with one assistant helping him out. I was thinking we needed more people on the case because the business was growing, the demands were greater and greater. In Elliot's letter he mentioned that if I ever need any help with management, he would love to be involved. Turned out he and Tony had worked together before, back when Tony was Graham Nash's lawyer. That was when Elliot entered the picture, partnering with Tony. The business moved into Elliot's offices on Sunset Boulevard. Elliot is kind of a mix of Gene Wilder and Woody Allen, but exactly what we needed to make that next step up the ladder.

Chapter Three/ It's Just the Normal Noises in Here

Bigger personalities than Jimmy's are hard to come by. These days Jimmy . . . well, it seems like he owns the whole record business. He's a mogul, a kingpin. But in those days we knew Jimmy from his work as an engineer and producer. He'd engineered Bruce Springsteen's Born To Run. *He'd worked with John Lennon. But the thing that caught our attention was something he'd done with Patti Smith, a song Springsteen cowrote with Patti that Jimmy produced: "Because The Night."*

IT CAME FROM HELL'S KITCHEN

Tom Petty: I started the serious writing for *Damn The Torpedoes* as soon as we got off the road from supporting *You're Gonna Get It!* I think it was around early 1978, and we began recording some time that same year. I wrote "Refugee" and "Here Comes My Girl" with Mike. And that's where the recording process started.

Damn The Torpedoes was the record that kicked us up into the stratosphere. Initially in our career, success had come in stages. It seemed that for every leap forward there was a lesson in humility waiting just around the corner. We stayed grounded as we grew. We'd gone from playing clubs to playing theaters. The vehicles we toured in got a little bigger, a little more comfortable each time we went out. With every passing tour it was harder to remember a time when we shared hotel rooms. But when *Damn The Torpedoes* came out, the pace really picked up. I think we toured from late in '79 to almost fall of the next year, nearly ten months of work. So much changed in this period. A lot of significant things went down, things that were defining for me as an artist. But why not begin with a positive one, eh? Jimmy Iovine comes into our lives.

Denny Cordell: I know I can take some people only so far. Jimmy had made a record with Patti Smith that really impressed us all.

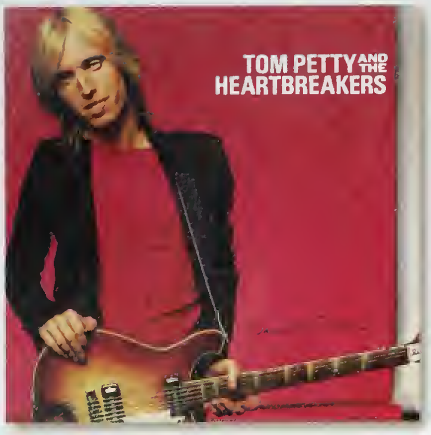
Tom Petty: Bigger personalities than Jimmy's are hard to come by. These days Jimmy . . . well, it seems like he owns the whole record business. He's a mogul, a kingpin. But in those days we knew Jimmy from his work as an engineer and producer. He'd engineered Bruce Springsteen's *Born To Run*. He'd worked with John Lennon. But the thing that caught our attention was something he'd done with Patti Smith, a song Springsteen cowrote with Patti that Jimmy produced: "Because The Night."

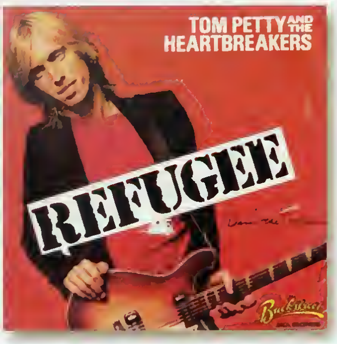
Denny Cordell had become too busy with his label to produce records. He wanted to oversee things but didn't really want to do the day-to-day work. So we started discussing who we might want in the studio with us. When Iovine's name came up, I thought, "Well, we can try him and see if he's interested." As it turned out, he was very keen to do it. He made plans to come to Los Angeles. "Don't worry," he tells me, "I'm going to come out and we will get going on this thing."

Now I'm about the same age as Jimmy, and we both come from humble backgrounds, but he's Hell's Kitchen and I'm the American South. We run at different speeds.

Mike Campbell: I think Jimmy sometimes got frustrated because we were, you know, from the South, a little slower.

Ron Blair: He was a guy that was a little more, uh, New York about it.





Jimmy Iovine: I was very confident. Overly confident. I broke up with my girlfriend to make that album. I had to come to California. I was so dedicated. I didn't care about anything. I didn't care about my shit or anybody else's shit.

Tom Petty: The fit was exactly what was needed. For the next several years I was, in many ways, closer to Jimmy than I was to anyone else on the team. We got very close.

So Jimmy comes out to L.A. Surprise number one? He shows up that first night with an engineer. I thought I was hiring him to be an engineer and a coproducer. He's no longer doing that, he tells me. Okay. Got it. I'm not going to make this a sticking point. He wants to hear what songs I've got, to know where we're going to start. He tells me he liked our first two records, so what have I got for this one. I play him "Here Comes My Girl" on my guitar. And I see he's looking kind of excited, and he goes, "Just that one? What else do you got?" I play "Refugee," again just me on the guitar. Jimmy looks around at everybody in the room and goes, "We're all going to be millionaires!" We liked him right away.

Jimmy Iovine: It's the first and last time I've ever said to anyone that they don't need any more songs. I've never said that to anyone since. Tom is one of the great songwriters of the rock era.

ONE MORE TAKE

Tom Petty: Jimmy worked like a dog on that record. We all did. We worked so hard. Eighteen-hour days. "Refugee" in particular. I think we did over a hundred takes over a period of time. The arrangement kept evolving, and we would keep hitting it.

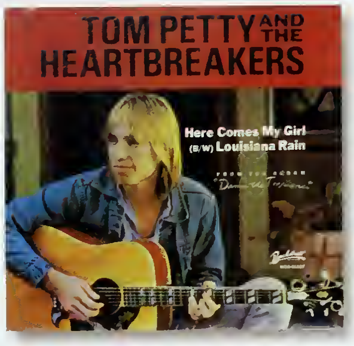
Benmont Tench: Elvis cut fifty-six takes of, I think, "Hound Dog."

Rick Rubin: That's the way all the great records were made in the olden days.

Tom Petty: We chased the perfect take with a level of obsession that I have never repeated, not like that. We got so hypnotized with working on it that we never knew when to quit. But we got it. Jimmy probably still doesn't think so. For all I know, he may still be sitting there complaining about the drummer. But I think we got it, that our efforts paid off. That song became our calling card.

The process of recording "Refugee" wasn't just about getting the perfect take with the perfect feel. That was a big part, chasing that one special performance that really did the song justice. But we were also developing a drum sound that was much bigger than what we captured on our first records. We were going after a huge sound. What Jimmy did in that regard changed the way drums were recorded. For years that sound was imitated by a lot of people. To achieve it, we tuned the snare drums so low that the stick had no bounce back—usually the snare drum is very tight, and when you hit it with the stick, it bounces right back. This drum was tuned so low that there was no bounce back. Hit it and you had to pull up. This made it very hard on the drummer because he didn't get that expected response from his drums. It was like throwing a drummer into unfamiliar territory and expecting him to know his way around right away. And, frankly, Jimmy didn't always have the best bedside manner with Stan Lynch. Not that Stan always made it easy. The two of them were sometimes a pretty potent cocktail.

Mike Campbell: We wanted to make great records. Not just average records. Naturally, in a recording session the drummer is going to get most of the pressure.



Benmont Tench: I don't think Jimmy liked the way Stan played . . . [but] Jimmy isn't the villain of the piece.

Jimmy Iovine: I had problems with drummers in general. Nothing ever sounded in time to me, the way Stan's backbeat lay slightly behind. . . . I was probably overreacting and being neurotic, you know? It was before Prozac. Before any of that shit. And being broke. The combination is tough.

Tom Petty: Once we got the right performance and the drum sound was in the vicinity of what we were after, the next step was to get the right sonic blend between the organ and the guitar and the drums. And the bass. We got there only through the principle of subtraction, meaning what we *didn't* play ultimately meant as much as what we did. Initially we were all trying to do those verses together, with guitars running through the whole thing. But the secret was to let the organ do it alone. Just have the guitars drop out and allow the voice and organ to carry it. That allowed a focus on the intensity of the lyric. That lyric carries a lot of the song's weight and needed space.

Jimmy Iovine: I learned so much from Tom. He has a dedication to writing that you rarely see today. He will never bring in a bad song.

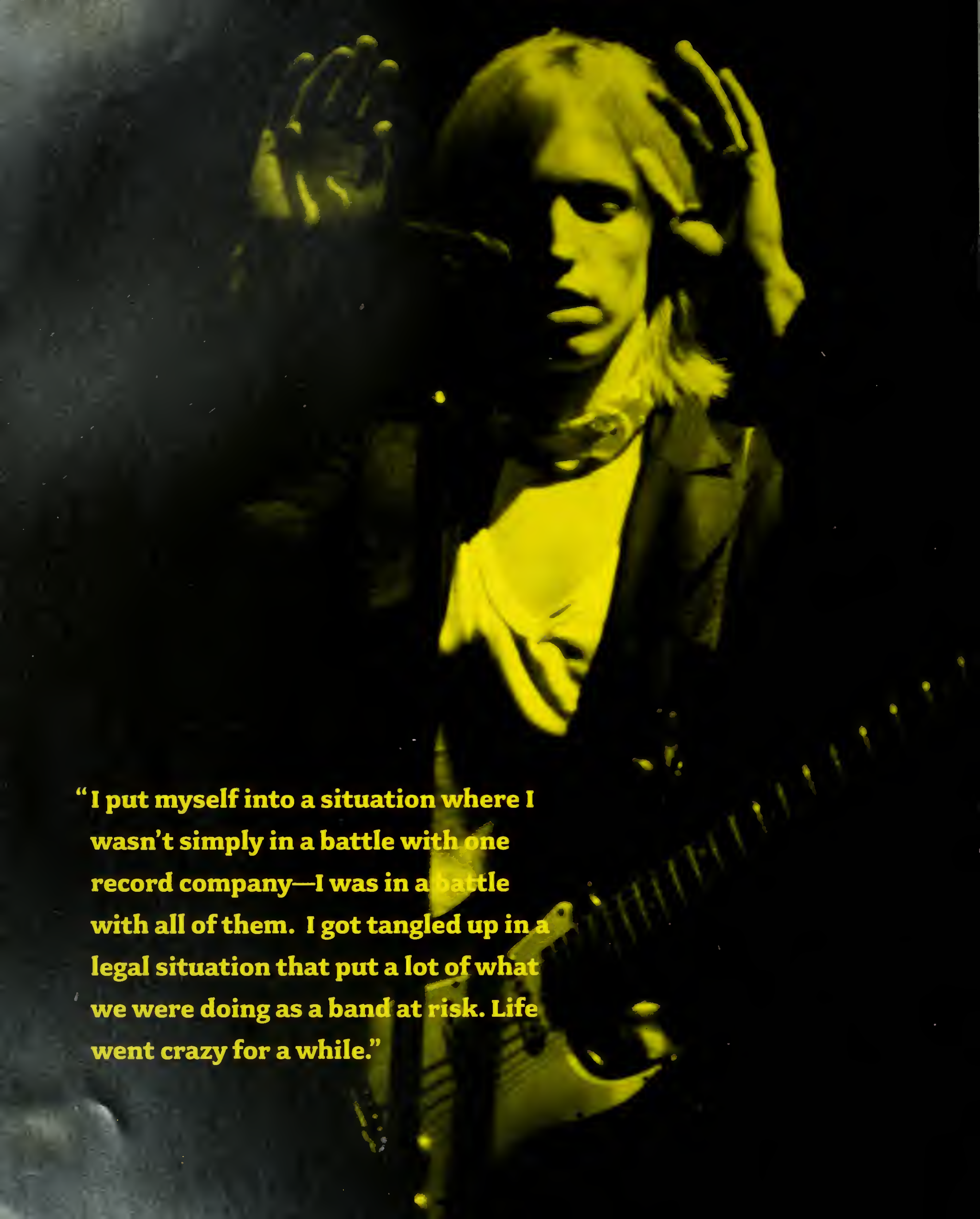
Tom Petty: "Here Comes My Girl" was another song that we needed to play with in order to make its essential power come forward. The first key to achieving it came when we extended the verse. I couldn't get the right feeling with the short verse. We needed to let the tension build. Then the real breakthrough came when I started talking the vocal line. Do you remember how the girl groups sometimes did this, like the Shangri-Las on "Leader Of The Pack"? "Is she really going out with him? Let's see." By the time Mary Weiss sings, "I met him at the candy store," there is a remarkable emotional energy that's released. Very powerful stuff in that song. Elvis also did it in the song "Are You Lonesome Tonight?" There's that section where he breaks it down, goes "Someone once said the world is a stage." I stumbled on the idea because when we first extended the verse, the length felt right but you were tired of the guy singing before you got to the chorus.

I thought, well, what if he started talking? I got really excited because that gave me these two levels of emotion, and the chorus came as a huge release. It really worked. But, frankly, it took a little bit of courage to stand up there and talk the verse. It was a little bit like acting. I had to sell it without any notes.

I can't tell you how satisfying it was, as a creative process, to really understand the needs of the song, first, and then to answer them. We made some choices at the level of production that were crucial to how the song was heard and how the character, the guy singing, was perceived. We really understood how important character development was going to be with this song. And we got it right. We needed a lot of room to build that character. Iovine said it best, "At first you don't know if you like this guy—and then you suddenly love him." It's that build from the kind of shifty person speaking the verse to the guy singing in the chorus. It's a love song, a big love song.

Bill Flanagan: *Damn The Torpedoes* made radio stations realize that rock and roll still had some teeth left.

Tom Petty: With the record finished, we still had to mix it. The craziness carried over into that process. Jimmy never felt like we nailed it and was saying, "I don't know. I think we just have to mix it one more time. Let's go to New York and see what it sounds like there." So we did. Jimmy and I flew to New York with the tapes. We were crazy. I don't know why would it sound different there. I can't imagine he knew. He just thought, "Let's take it to the Record Plant in New York, mix it again, and see what happens." So we got into mixing it. We were in the studio when the engineer finally turns to us and says, " I don't know, you guys. I don't think I can



"I put myself into a situation where I wasn't simply in a battle with one record company—I was in a battle with all of them. I got tangled up in a legal situation that put a lot of what we were doing as a band at risk. Life went crazy for a while."

beat what you already have. I can't. What you've got here is pretty amazing. I don't think you should mix it anymore." And that's when we finally threw in our towels.

Jimmy Iovine: For a minute there we thought the album sucked. So we go into the studio and get the masters that we cut. And we put them on. And we realized, "Whoa, this shit sounds bigger than life!" I remember that moment. We both looked at each other. It was the greatest feeling in the world. That moment of doing something with your friend like that and having it become such a great record, such an important record at the time, there could never be anything to top that. Nothing. Nothing could ever beat that feeling. It's the most magical thing in the world. It's not like a movie where there's forty-five people involved. The record is you and this guy. Your family and his family.

PENNIES FROM HEAVEN?

Tony Dimitriades: Tom's first record deal involved a very low royalty rate.

Bill Flanagan: Like so many artists, Tom signed a bad deal. But he did what very few artists do, he actually stood up on his hind legs and said I will go to war for this.

Jimmy Iovine: We made the record under the pressure of the lawsuit. Extreme, extreme pressure.

Tom Petty: During the time that we recorded *Damn The Torpedoes* I learned a lot about the Heartbreakers as a band and about myself as a songwriter, producer, and bandleader. But it was also a defining moment in terms of me learning about the limits of my principles.

Jackson Browne: This is one of the first ways in which Tom distinguished himself. Everybody has had problems with their record company, but he really took it to the wall.

Tom Petty: I put myself into a situation where I wasn't simply in a battle with one record company—I was in a battle with all of them. I got tangled up in a legal situation that put a lot of what we were doing as a band at risk. Life went crazy for a while. Every night Jimmy and I were talking on the phone about how we were going to get the album out. We were in such deep water with the law at that point. We were hiding the tapes because they were threatening to take them.

It all began with the fact that I had a low royalty rate. But I had also signed away my publishing many years before, without understanding what that meant. I got my education along the way.

When Damn The Torpedoes *hit it was incredible. There was a great feeling of accomplishment, like we got something that we'd all been pulling for for years. I'm sure the lives of everyone in the band were changing so rapidly that they were just trying to hang on to this thing wherever it was going.*

Later on I could see it as the beginning of a lot of problems. You can't really bitch about it because, well, that's what you wanted, it's what you were trying to do. But that level of success brings with it the beginning of a certain amount of isolation. I focused more on the positive side. I thought it was fantastic that we'd broken through. We had a lot of hit songs on the radio, and this was in the glory days of FM rock. Damn The Torpedoes *was just made for that era. It really did well for us. The band didn't talk about it much among ourselves, but we all knew things were changing.*

Success seems very unreal. You work so hard and, when success comes, you've almost forgotten what you're doing. It's very hard to believe that things are going that good. You're waiting for the other shoe to drop. Your impulse isn't to assume it will go on like that for a long time.

ABOVE:

Mike in the dressing room, circa 1979.

PREVIOUS PAGES:

To..., Mike, Stan, Ron, Benmont, NYC, September 1979.

Tony Dimitriades: He made a point of knowing what was going on in the business right from the time I started working with him. But when the lawsuit happened, I guess that's when he really got his education in business.

Tom Petty: When we first signed with Shelter Records, MCA was our distributor. Then somewhere in there we were moved over to ABC distribution. Because our first record took off, we were able to renegotiate the deal we had with ABC. When we did that renegotiation we were so nervous about things changing all the time that we had a clause added that said if our contractors sold to anybody else that they would need our consent and—this part is important—that we would have the right to leave or reach an agreement with whoever they're selling the contract to. ABC said okay to this. Next thing we know, they've sold the whole company to MCA. No one got our consent. I was furious. I felt like they sold us like we were groceries, frozen pork or something.

We went to MCA and said, "Well, wait a minute. You're going to have to let us go because of the clause in the contract." At that point we were told that we just had to forget about that and go along with what they had in mind for us. Of course, we were not in a position to fight a big corporation, which MCA was at the time. It was astounding to see a company of that size act like they were above the law—or, worse yet, to realize that they might just be. It could make you crazy.

Elliot and Tony said, "Well, there's a way around this. The royalty rate that they have you at goes all the way back to the deal Mudcrutch signed with Denny Cordell. It hasn't changed since then. You're making pennies on a record." They also said that on those terms we hadn't yet made enough to cover our debts to the record company. Understand that when a record company gives money, it ain't free. They're expecting it all back. At that moment, if you ran the numbers, we were not in the black. Until the band made enough royalties to pay back the cost of the recordings, we were in debt to the label. The common knowledge in the industry is that a label will float you, as long as you float. "Technically," my managers said, "you're bankrupt."

Here we are, thinking our ship had come in—we've had hit records, you know? And I'm told we're bankrupt. The point? If we're bankrupt, all contracts are void. Add to this the fact that ABC sold our contract without consulting us. It looked like we could walk. But, why stop there? Let's go on. We could also make the case that the publishing deal was not fair because it had been signed under duress. They had said, "You sign the publishing deal, or we won't sign the recording deal." I signed my songs away without even knowing what publishing was. This is, of course, a common practice in the business. Happens all the time. But I asked myself, "*Should* this happen all the time?" Boy did I open a can of worms for myself. I was a small figure, an ant, going at a very big issue that affected some very big people.

Mike Campbell: I'm happy to be the second seat to this guy because he doesn't take any shit.

AN INDUSTRY POWERED BY DREAMS

Tom Petty: I love the music business. It gave me a way out. But I also hate it. Here's an industry that would be nothing if it weren't for young people, typically outsiders, who have a dream they can't let go of—and then they sign bad deals. The hopes-and-dreams factor can give businessmen one hell of an advantage. From the artist side it's often, "Give me that contract." A head full of dreams, a whole lot of nerve and ambition, and no legal background. I was exactly what they were looking for. There's a lot of money to be made off of fellows who fit this description.

Jackson Browne: The record business is founded on thievery. It's robbery. From the beginning to the present it has been like a systematic ripping off of the artist. It's a deal with the devil when you make this agreement. What was that song from *The Last DJ*, with that line, "You get to be famous, I get to be rich"?

Tom Petty: I was being ripped off just like the black artists in the '50s and '60s, just like the innocent rock-and-rollers who were making the music that got me started. This industry has always taken in the hungry, talented youth and exploited them to its own advantage. I'm hardly unique. I just started thinking, "Here's this huge corporation, and they want to take my songs away from me? I wrote them. I should own them." When I signed that paper, I thought publishing was songbooks, I swear to God. I didn't know that when I signed that contract they owned the copyright to my songs and I would never see a dime for them. When I found out that was the case, I certainly knew that was wrong. So I figured I'm just going to fold my hands until somebody does something about this, until the label lets us go.

Tony Dimitriades: We refused to deliver an album.

Tom Petty: No more music. Then it turned into a big deal because, apparently, were I to prove myself bankrupt it would set an industry standard that would allow lots and lots of people to use the same argument and leave their contracts. For this reason, more and more lawyers were showing up on the scene. Lots of lawyers.

MCA brings me to this big lawyer. But before he comes out—they're doing this like a real show—he has an opening act, a few lesser lawyers who try to talk legalities. I didn't really understand what they were talking about. Then the big guy comes out. He says, "Let me tell you something, kid. You're going to forget this whole thing. You're going to make your records and shut up. You don't have a leg to stand on here. You don't have

near the money you would need to pull this off. Do you see what I have here? Do you see this office? You think I got this because I don't know shit? You shut up and go make your records."

Now, you can imagine my personality, especially in those days. He was as good as baiting me. I said, "Look, I will sell fucking peanuts before I give in to you. You can break me, but you can't make records, can you? You can't sing. And I ain't going to buckle, not until you let us go. I will file for bankruptcy and take it all the way to the Supreme Court if I have to." It was a standoff. It made me mad. I wasn't going to be talked to that way. For me, this was just another giant to throw stones at. I wasn't buying it that this corporation was so powerful that they could just tell us what to do.

So Elliot Roberts bankrolled us, paid for all of the attorneys and the recording. And I filed for bankruptcy.

Tony Dimitriades: There was an audible gasp around the music business.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Tom Petty: It wasn't a pleasant experience at all. I was never found bankrupt. Understand that I had plenty of dough in my pocket. It wasn't that. The bankruptcy case was based on the premise that we couldn't possibly pay back the money we "owed" the label under the terms of the record deal. But then—and here is where it gets cold—they took away our right to perform. They put an injunction on us. I had to go to the court and show just cause that we needed to perform. The judge says, okay, you can play a tour. That was what we called The Lawsuit Tour. We had shirts that said "WHY-MCA" on the front.

We finally went to court. The case is being heard and witnesses are being called. And at the last minute MCA buckles. They realized I'm not going to give up, which I wouldn't. What did I have to lose? I'm going to see it all the way through. Even if I did lose, what are they going to do? Take my songs away from me? That had already happened. The tide started going my way in the courtroom. At the end of it all, what they did was give us our own label at MCA and give me my publishing back. MCA would be the distributor. We started a record label called Backstreet Records. Our first release was *Damn The Torpedoes*, the title of which came from that whole tumultuous experience.

Bill Flanagan: He'd been involved in a lot of legal battles. He was out of the spotlight for a while. People didn't know if the band was going to break up or if they would ever be back. It was a moment of triumph when they came back, like the good guys are actually winning the war.

FOLLOWING THIS I HAD TO FOLLOW THAT

Bruce Petty: I think that's really when we went, "Wow! He's made it. This thing is really going to go."

Tom Petty: *Damn The Torpedoes* took us all the way around the world, from America to Europe back to America to Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and then back for another tour of America. After we got home, that's when it first dawned on me—you're competing with yourself now. You're going to have to give them another great LP. At the same time, I recognized that the artist in me didn't want to do the same thing. A lot of folks do that in the record business, but we always frowned on people that made the same record again with different words or whatever. We were going to try and take it somewhere we hadn't been. And I think we did.

I was already working on *Hard Promises* when I got a call letting me know that my mother had died. The last time I'd seen her was on the *Damn The Torpedoes* tour. She was very sick and was in so much pain that I knew it probably wasn't going to go on. When I got the call that night I almost felt a sigh of relief for her. It was another cloud on that year for me. You can file things like that away, but they're still working on you.

Getting our first Rolling Stone *cover was a very exciting thing for us. It meant you had arrived in a big way. When that issue of* Rolling Stone *finally came out I was lying in a hospital bed. I'd just had my tonsils out. Someone came in and dropped it on the bed. I couldn't really talk. I just looked at it and smiled.*

PREVIOUS PAGES:

The Heartbreakers backstage at the No Nukes concerts, Madison Square Garden, September 1, 1979.

Top right: Tom with Jackson Browne and Elliot Roberts.

FOLLOWING PAGES:

On the set of "Woman In Love," 1981.

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My mother could see my success coming. I remember sending her a gold record when the *You're Gonna Get It!* album got there, and she was happy about that. The last time I saw her she couldn't speak well, but she had some newspapers that she had saved and showed me she was aware of what the record was doing. She was really proud. It's a great regret of mine that I could have made her life so much better at that point, but she wasn't there anymore. I think I came back and addressed the loss with *Southern Accents*, but at the time I didn't want to deal with it musically.

Adria Petty: It was sad because it was the first time that he had success, and he didn't get to share it with her. That was hard on him. I remember him . . . it was like some light went out. She really believed in him.

Tom Petty: So I was writing songs for what would become *Hard Promises*. The rest of the band was out chasing women. They're out having a great time and enjoying the fruits of our labor. Really, I remember this as a nice time. We all got nice cars and started buying homes. You would come out of rehearsal, and there would be five shiny black cars—they were all black for some reason. But, for me, most nights and most days my time was spent trying to write songs.

Jimmy Iovine was coproducing again, so this meant we were on the phone a lot, talking about where we might take the recordings. For Mike and me it was all about learning to make records, that whole time of *Hard Promises*. We were very curious as to how you got sound from your head to the tape. It wasn't always as simple as just playing it. It was how you played it, where you played it, what unexpected noise you could get from something, what microphone you used. The whole art of recording became a matter of greater interest. We started to change and experiment a little bit with song style, with sounds. I think *Hard Promises* sounds like we were trying lots of different things.

It turned out good. If not exactly what people expected, it did well.

Eddie Vedder: I waited in line. I skipped class and waited in line, brought the record home at lunch, learned the song "The Waiting," and went back to school with it in my head. Then I was playing it by the time I went home.

Jackson Browne: "The Waiting" kills me.

Tom Petty: "The Waiting" was a big hit and "Woman In Love" was on its way, at least until another song, not from *Hard Promises*, stopped it. But that's a story that requires a little set-up.

NO GURLS ALLOWED

Tom Petty: This was, of course, when we got to know Stevie Nicks better. After this year-long campaign of "write me a song," I finally wrote something for Stevie. She said she was going to leave Fleetwood Mac to make a solo record. Initially the way she put it was this: "I'm going to leave Fleetwood Mac and join the Heartbreakers." We would go, "Well, that's interesting, but there aren't any girls in the Heartbreakers. You can be our friend but you can't be in the band."

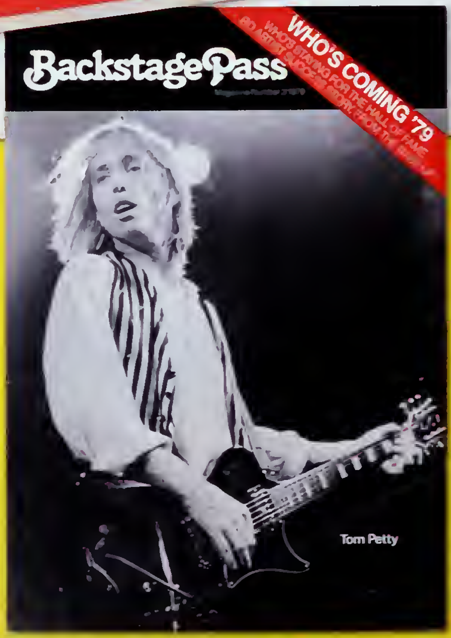
Stevie Nicks: I joined Fleetwood Mac on the first day of 1975. I think I started to become a fan of Tom Petty's in 1977. By 1978, a big fan of Tom Petty. By 1979, if Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers had called me up and said leave Fleetwood Mac and come join us, I would probably have left Fleetwood Mac.

Tom Petty: She hung around all the time, and God bless her, she's got some staying power I'll tell you, because we did not make it easy for her. I finally tell her I'm going to give her a song, and it's this really beautiful song

TOM PETTY AND THE HEARTBREAKERS

Expenses - U.K. and Europe - Spring 1980 "Damn the Torpedos"

Trucking:	2 semis (including fuel, tolls, ferries, tax and hotels for drivers)	$25,000.00
Airfares:	Approx. 15 people @ $1,000.00 each	15,000.00
Freight:	Round trip $1.17 per lb. est. at 6500 lbs. + carnet + bond	15,810.00
Pay:	Band - 6 wks. at $500.00 x 5 people	15,000.00
	Crew - 6 wks. at $2,700.00 per wk.	16,200.00
	Crew (perdiem)- 40 days x $25.00 p. day x 5 people	5,000.00
Buses:	2 - U.K. for 20 days @ $260.00 per day	10,080.00
	2 - Europe for 3 wks. @ $1,500.00 per bus	15,000.00
Misc:	Including hire of piano, rehearsal in U.K., cars in London, repair, etc.	10,000.00
	(includes band, road crew & bus drivers)	
ondon-	Band- 7 singles @ 11 days x £45.00 p. day	7,000.00
	Crew- 5 doubles @ 7 days x £50.00 p. day	3,500.00
vncs.-	Band- 7 singles @ 12 days @ £25.00 ea.	7,000.00
	Crew- 5 doubles @ 15 days @ £30.00 ea.	4,500.00
	2 bus drivers-singles-(1) 12 days @ £25.00	600.00
	(2) 15 days @ £25.00	750.00
ope -	Band-7 singles @ 16 days x £40.00 p. day	9,000.00
	Crew- 5 doubles @ 17 days x £50.00 p. day	8,500.00
	Bus driver singles (1) 17 days @ £40.00	1,360.00
	(2) 16 days @ £40.00	1,280.00
s:	Per estimate at Electrasound - including rehearsals	50,000.00
	TOTAL	$217,780.00



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called "Insider." I took it to the studio, and Jimmy was elated with it. He was just knocked out, and said, "I can't believe you're going to give this away."

We immediately sat down, the five Heartbreakers, and started working out the song. Jimmy was there looking over our shoulder. We cut the song in anticipation of Stevie coming down to sing it. She appears the next day—and it's a complicated song, so we played it quite a bit for her—and she likes it. But, as we run the track for her, she doesn't sing the lead on it. She sings a beautiful harmony, really beautiful. But it was me carrying the melody. When we got to the end of the night I said to her, "I'll be honest with you, Stevie. I don't really want to give you this song. I like it a lot. I know I said I was going to give it to you, but I'm not going to give it to you. I'm really sorry." She was great. She tells me it's no problem and says, "To tell you the truth, I was looking for something with a little more tempo."

Stevie Nicks: I wanted to have a solo record that sounded like Tom Petty. I don't know what you would call it, that Florida swamp rock-and-roll, Southern religion thing that Tom has.

Tom Petty: At that point I learned that when you're writing a song for somebody you always tend to write one that you think sounds just like them. But the reason they're asking you to write them a song is they want something that doesn't sound like them.

I felt apologetic about taking "Insider" back. At that point I had four or five songs that had been recorded for the *Hard Promises* album that I hadn't gotten around to finishing, even though they had vocal and track recorded. One of these was "Stop Draggin' My Heart Around," which she liked. I told her she can take it. Then it became a little bit like Spy vs. Spy when Jimmy got involved. I started to think I should finish the song and then decide if we should give it away, because we had done that with the other one. He said, "No, I hear a girl singing this song."

Stevie Nicks: Jimmy really moved the chess pieces to make it possible for me to have a solo career.

Jimmy Iovine: Stevie has even changed the story. I saw her recently. She says, "It's because you were my boyfriend." I mean, she's horrible because she will immediately side with Tom. She will go right there.

Tom Petty: Now I've heard a lot of different people tell me stories about how Jimmy maneuvered to get that track for Stevie and that Jimmy Iovine was kind of shady, that he knew all along that that's what he wanted to do. Convincing stuff. I don't know if it's true or not. From my standpoint, I didn't see him do anything like that. Part of me thinks Stevie was just bound and determined to get the song and got it. There were so many hits we were having at that point in our life that I don't think we were that upset or concerned about it. Stevie did a great job on it. It was a huge record. And I'm sure it bought a lot of bicycles for our kids. The only gripe we ever had about "Stop Draggin' My Heart Around" was that it sort of knocked "Woman In Love" out of the water.

Mike Campbell: I remember Stevie was in New York, checking into the hotel the same time we were checking out. She came running up to me and said, "Did you hear our song? It's a big hit!" And the first thing out of my mouth was, "Yeah, it killed our single dead."

Jimmy Iovine: Now, years later, at my fortieth birthday, Bruce Springsteen gets up and says, "Tom, he stole 'Because The Night' from me, for Patti Smith." These guys tell the stories with absolute fabrication. But they make for great stories.

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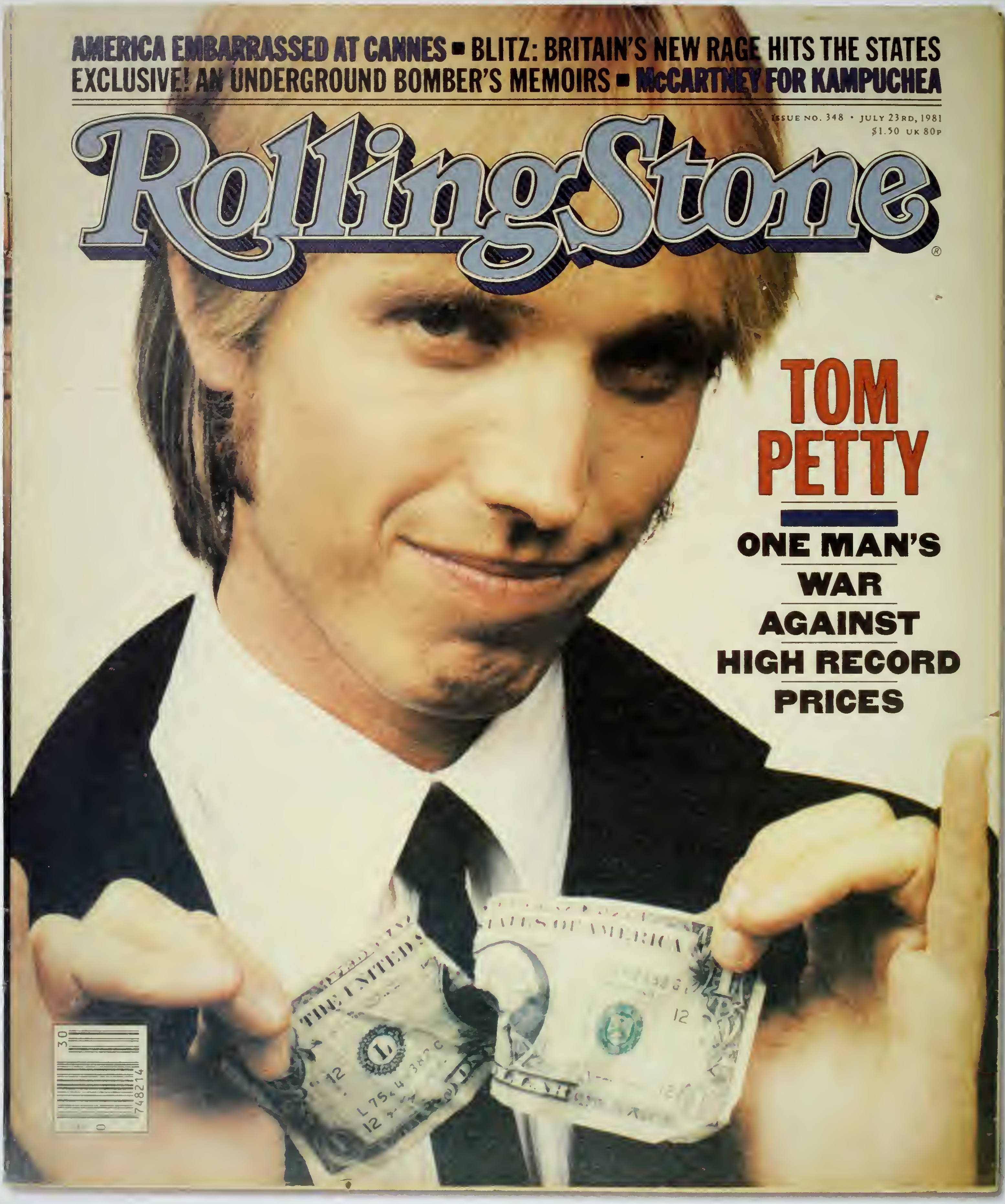


TOM PETTY

ONE MAN'S WAR AGAINST HIGH RECORD PRICES

What everyone leaves out is that Tom and I really, really believed that "The Waiting" was the biggest song he ever cut. And we were wrong. I thought "The Waiting" was five "Stop Draggin' My Heart Around"s. Now I see Tom sometimes, I say you know, I think there were too many words in the chorus. This is fucking thirty years later, and I'm still like, "Why wasn't that song a bigger hit?"

$9.98

Tom Petty: When we were doing the *Hard Promises* album, things got difficult because we wound up in another fight with the record company.

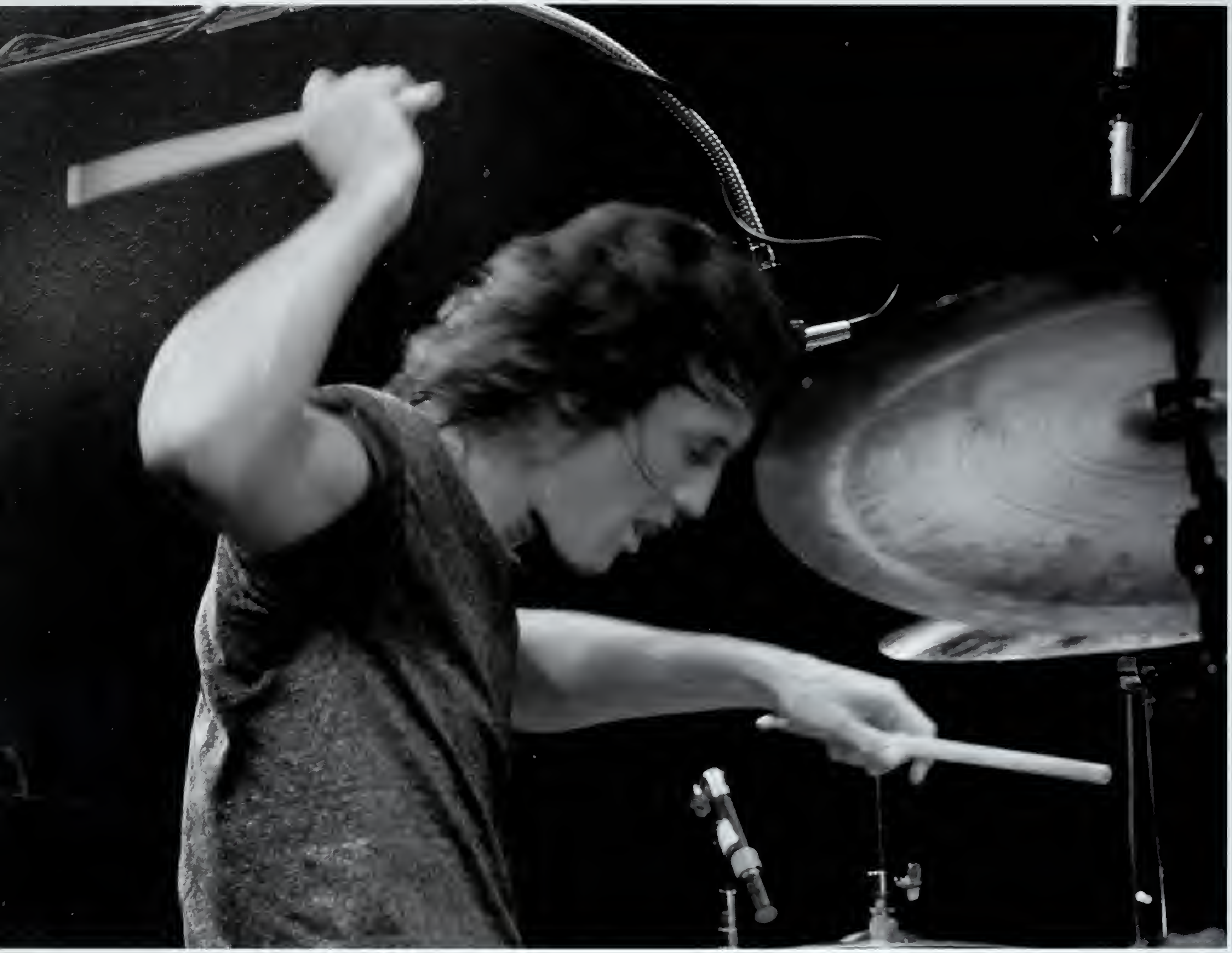
Tony Dimitriades: I walked into a record store and I saw this sign up behind the counter saying, "Coming soon, new Tom Petty—$9.98!"

I called the record company and I said, "What's with this? I saw this thing at a $9.98 list price." They tell me, "Oh yeah, we're going to put it up. We can make more money on this album." I said, "I feel sure that Tom is not going to want that." I called Tom and he freaked out. He said they weren't going to raise their prices on his back. And we refused to deliver the album.

Tom Petty: This was the last thing I wanted, but the record company was looking to use our popularity to increase record prices across the board. I didn't want to land in that briar patch again, but it was deflating. Like a fool, I stood up to them and said, "No, you can't do it to us. That's too much money." It's funny now, but at the time $9.98 seemed like an outrageous amount of money for an LP. So, there I am again in hot water with the record company. And I've made my case so that there is no way to back out or concede the point. It was around then that I started to get a little depressed about the whole thing and thought, you know, this is just more than I signed on for. Once again it became like I was fighting with all the labels, because no one was too keen about me stopping the increase. The press made a big deal of it, but I can't say I ever saw another artist back me up on it. It was more like, "Let him be the sacrificial lamb, and we'll see what happens and if he gets away with it." I did get away with it. I got the record out at a lower price. But I don't think I was the same human after that. I think it beat me up pretty good. It was traumatic.

It went on for months. But they finally backed down. I suppose they figured they'd sneak the higher price on someone else later. The truth is that this really did keep the price of records down for a long, long time. There was nobody that wanted to do it after I was on the cover of *Rolling Stone* tearing the dollar bill in half. I was making statements like, "I don't really need the extra buck. I don't understand why they do." It was a long time before they creeped the price up, and I'm kind of proud of that because I had something to do with it.

Bill Flanagan: Tom Petty has fought a lot of public battles.



Chapter Four/ Between Two Worlds

I'm proud, really proud, of how long the Heartbreakers have stuck together. Here we are today, traveling with four original members after thirty years. That's an achievement. Not too many bands can make this claim. My feeling is that you'll never really know what a band is, what it can do, if it doesn't have time to reveal its identity.

A BIKINI STORE?

Tony Dimitriades: I don't remember if Ron actually quit. I think he demonstrated that he wanted to quit by not showing up a couple of times, and I had to fire him, is what really happened.

Ron Blair: It just kind of happened, and I was relieved to not be doing that for a year. At the time I had a lot of issues with the music business. I thought that it was a little sleazy and funky and full of people with egos. I was right.

Tom Petty: There was a lot of pressure in the studio on the rhythm section, and he began to be there less and less as I remember it. If he was late, Mike or I would play the bass, and I think that hurt his feelings in a way. He just left. Was he fired? I don't think so, but I think by the time he was going to leave we were all on the same page. He didn't just leave us, he left the music business. Opened a bikini store.

Jim Lenehan: Opened a bikini shop. I would have never called that one.

Tony Dimitriades: Ron was a wonderful, easygoing guy, but the pressures of success were taking their toll on him. On some level, Tom and Ron were at different ends of a spectrum. As the business grew and got more complicated, Tom dug right in, asserting himself as the leader. He was always much more than a great songwriter and performer—he instinctually knew how to lead a band. But Ron, well Ron drifted away as the operation took on more complexity.

Ron Blair: There used to be a hotel on Sunset Boulevard called the Tropicana. I think Tom Waits had a room there year-round. Bowie was staying there. And I just stayed there for months during the lawsuit. Just by the pool or whatever. Just waiting for things to settle up. I could have waited a few more months. It was fine with me.

Elliot Roberts: When you wake up at four in the morning and make notes so that the next morning you don't forget what you were thinking—that's how you live your life when you're on a project. That's how Tom is. That's how Neil [Young] is. That's how Bob [Dylan] is. That's how Joni Mitchell was. Those kinds of artists are twenty-four-hour artists. They're not nine to five.

Eileen Basich: Tom was the one. He wrote the songs. He sang the songs. He had the ideas. I think it was always obvious.

Tom Petty: Playing in a band has been one of the greatest joys in my life. I'm proud, really proud, of how long the Heartbreakers have stuck together. Here we are today, traveling with four original members after thirty years. That's an achievement. Not too many bands can make this claim. My feeling is that you'll never really know what a band is, what it can do, if it doesn't have time to reveal its identity. If you put a group of great players together who share a love for a particular kind of music and allow them to develop, something is going to happen. But you won't know what it is until you get there. The surprises have kept me deeply engaged. But there's no doubt that personnel issues have been among the most challenging issues for me as a bandleader.

BREAKING IN A NEW HEARTBREAKER

Tom Petty: There was a guy named Del Shannon who was sort of a rock-and-roll legend in the early '60s–late '50s. I had always been a big fan of his and ran into him one day in 1978, I think. He was talking to me about producing a record for him. Would I be interested in that? I was very interested. I had never produced a record for anyone except for us, so I took the job. I thought it would be fun, and it was. It wasn't a real hard record to make. At one point we had a few overdubs left to do on it. We needed bass on a couple of tracks. I asked Del if he had anyone. He said, "Oh, yeah, I've got a kid in my band who plays great."

In walks Howie Epstein. He looked really striking, three-foot pompadour all brushed back, a big gold earring, and Cuban heeled boots. He really looked like somebody you should take seriously—and he was really good. What really knocked me out was when they went to do some vocals. Del brought him out, he sang, and I was like, "Wow! This kid is a really good singer." I decided in my mind that I was going to steal this guy and put him in the Heartbreakers. My dream had always been to have a very solid harmony singer.

We had Stan, who was a harmony singer, but I wanted somebody who could get above Stan, with a high tenor voice. If we could do that, we would have three voices. I just wanted one more voice. I made it my business to go down and see Howie. I went down to a rehearsal they were doing, Del and his band, and they were going to play in Phoenix. So I flew into Phoenix to see the gig. I cornered Howie and asked what he would think about joining the Heartbreakers. He was surprised, but quickly said he'd love it. He asked when I wanted him to start. I said, "Well, Ron's leaving, and the other guys will need to see you, but I think you're going to get the job." That meant right away.

Howie Epstein: Sometimes I wondered how it was for them, being together and growing up together, what it would be like to have this new guy in the band? Sometimes I think it was weirder for them than for me. I can appreciate my change in fortunes, though. I know the other end way too well, trudging through the Midwest in vans and U-Hauls in twenty-below-zero weather. I never take it for granted.

Tom Petty: I get home and Del Shannon calls. He's furious and says, "Don't take Howie. You cannot take Howie. I count on him so much. You can have anybody you want, but don't take Howie. Why would you take my guy, we're friends?" I said, "Del, I love you, but I'm taking Howie." And that was that. Del got over it after a while. Howie was a friend for some twenty years after that. He was as crazy about making

PREVIOUS PAGES:

Tom and Del Shannon, Cherokee Studios, February 1981.

Publicity photograph from the Southern Accents *period (note Tom's broken hand).*

records as we were, and he turned out to be a pretty good producer in the end. An unusual guy. He had no interest in celebrity or being famous or anything like that. He never gave an interview that I know of, completely shunned all that, but he was a true musician. His first record with us was *Long After Dark*.

STRAIGHT INTO DARKNESS

Bill Flanagan: I think of *Long After Dark* as being a real band record. It's a record that I really, really loved. It has one of my favorite Tom Petty songs, "Straight Into Darkness." He has this ability to write something that everybody can identify with.

Benmont Tench: Tom was singing so well [around that time] it would blow your mind. My favorite cuts . . . there's an absolutely lovely song called "A Wasted Life." And "Straight Into Darkness." And "Between Two Worlds."

Jimmy Iovine: *Long After Dark* was my third album working with the band. After three albums you should shoot your producer. I mean, except for George Martin. I don't think I was as focused as I was earlier.

Tom Petty: It had a big single called "You Got Lucky." I think it's a good album. The last time I heard it, it was pretty good. The only thing I could say that I didn't like about it was that it wasn't really going forward enough for me. I think it's imperative that you move everything forward with each recording. It was sort of a "tread water" album. We're doing what we're supposed to do here—we're not really going forward.

Tony Dimitriades: I've never seen another artist who judges his or her own work with such scrutiny. He can be very self-lacerating.

Tom Petty: There was some music cut that didn't get on *Long After Dark*, music that I felt would have made it a better record. But Jimmy Iovine and I didn't always see eye to eye on the material. He thought some songs sounded too country. They didn't sound country to me. And I think our choices hurt the album in a way. There was a really good song called "Keeping Me Alive" that I really love. Somehow it was decided it wouldn't go on, and I think it would have made a difference if it had. You live and you learn. Most of the time.

I think we kept setting the bar higher. If we'd come out with a real stinker and then came out with *Long After Dark*, then we might have had it easier. But we're pretty steady. I don't think there are many groups in rock and roll that have had our career. In a way, it makes you a little less appreciated at times because your audience is taking for granted that it's going to be good. There are things on that record, like a song called "Finding Out," that's fantastic. "Straight Into Darkness," a really, really good song. I think that was a better record than we got credit for at the time. It's like, oh yeah, they've got a hit song on the radio, but it wasn't really applauded. What am I to do? Spoiled and mistreated, right?

BRINGING IT ALL BACK HOME

Tom Petty: We would go on tour and get back from the tour and go straight into the studio. If there was a break of any kind, I had to use it to write because I always needed ten or twelve songs. We didn't like to sit around much: everybody was anxious to keep going. And we did.

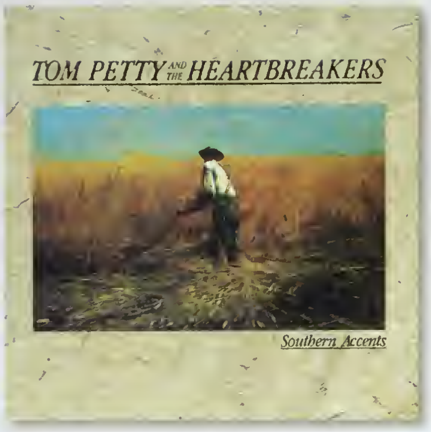
Needless to say, it's very hard to try to have a family and do this routine. My kids didn't see as much of me as they would like. I don't know how you could do the conventional family thing. Your life as a performer has got nothing to do with anyone else's. Because of this a lot of your friends become people who are musicians and can relate to how you live your life. This was how I had been living since I was very, very young. If I wasn't playing shows, I was trying to figure out how to. But it was in my mind to find out if I could have it both ways.

So, I get a brilliant idea: put a studio in the house. That's when *Southern Accents* was made. The line between family and work got a little confused in there. I mean, I already had some trouble stopping working. This gave me new territory to explore in that regard. We approached that new situation with some unwritten rules, like if I was home and writing or in the studio, we never let the girls in there. No gals down at the studio, just the band, no distractions.

Adria Petty: They had a recording studio in our house when I was about ten, nine or ten, when they were making *Southern Accents*. That was cool. The music would come up through the vents.

Tom Petty: There were a few things going on with that album. If I felt like *Long After Dark* didn't move things along as far as I wanted, *Southern Accents* was thick with departures. There was a lot of experimentation. One of our experiments on that record came in the form of Dave Stewart. Now, the Heartbreakers were a closed circle, a very tight-knit entity. My immediate joy in bringing Dave's eccentricities into our living room was not matched by the band. They were slow to accept Dave. There had never been anybody from the outside working on our records. I think the fact that I was writing with him made them suspicious or jealous. I don't know what it was. When they got to know him and saw that he was harmless, that he was only trying to make good music for everyone—you know, then it was okay.

Dave Stewart: I think most of his band—and I don't blame them—were going, "What the fuck is this?" It was called *Southern Accents*, and it sounded like we're in India all of a sudden.



Tom Petty: It was Jimmy Iovine who brought Dave Stewart to me. Jimmy was working with Stevie Nicks again and wanted me to write something for her. He came to me and asked me who I thought was a good songwriter working at the time. I said, well, I think this guy Dave Stewart from the Eurythmics shows a lot of potential. The Eurythmics were just starting to break big. I told Jimmy he should call Dave.

Then I got a call at home one day, and it was Dave Stewart. He told me he was over at Sunset Sound, that Jimmy had called him and said we should get together. Dave said he was supposed to write something for Stevie Nicks and would I help? Iovine at work again, right? I went down to Sunset Sound and Dave was great. We started to hang out every day. It was his first time in Los Angeles. That's like your first time at Disneyland. Dave wanted to go on all the rides.

Truth of it was that Dave was one of the only bright lights in that period. He was sober and funny and crazy. And quite a dresser. Each day he'd arrive in a different outfit. I remember the two of us going to a rodeo tailor and buying expensive cowboy boots and hats, just wearing these clothes and hanging around town. He kept things lively. Once in the studio there was a background singer with a really high part, and Dave was having trouble getting her to hit the note. She's going for the take and he runs in in his underpants—and son of a gun if she didn't do it. He took her mind off it for just long enough for her to nail the part.

The song we wrote for Stevie, or meant to write for Stevie, was "Don't Come Around Here No More." We wrote it and started to record it when Stevie wasn't around. When she finally came in and heard it with my vocal on it, she was put off by it. It was like, "I can't sing that. You've already done it. It sounds good with you singing it. I don't think I could make it better." She took a pass, but it wasn't for her. It was for me.

Jimmy Iovine: I said, "Tom, do me a favor." He says, "I'm not coming." I said, "Tom, just do me a favor. Come here and write the fucking lyrics please." He came down, wrote the lyrics, and took the song. That's the fucking truth. You know it's true, Tom.

Tom Petty: "Don't Come Around Here No More" was a very big song for us. A bit of a breakthrough. Dave Stewart eventually bought some property right around the corner from me, built a house and a studio there, became part of the family.

GOT MY OWN WAY OF TALKING

Tom Petty: I wanted to explore the sense of place that I got growing up in the South. Stereotypes cloud our understanding of what the whole region is. Those Southern accents . . . rock and roll really comes from the South. It comes out of Memphis, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas. In my mind were all the people that I see as the beginnings of rock and roll and R&B, and all the places they came from, and I just wanted to explore that landscape. Sometimes I look back and I think it was a confusing thing for some people. There were those who could only process this by thinking of us as a Southern rock group, which we're not by any stretch of the imagination. This was another side of the experimentation with *Southern Accents*, that thematic focus that brought the project into the vicinity of the concept album.

You hear this most explicitly in "Rebels" and "Southern Accents," but it's there in a number of the songs—you know, "Spike," "The Best Of Everything," and certainly the B-side of "Don't Come Around Here No More," "Trailer," which I've always really loved. I think that part of my interest in looking at the South, at least at that time, comes from the experience of my mother's death. Events on that scale don't always make it into your writing right away. In this case there was certainly a delayed reaction. She passed around the time of *Damn The Torpedoes*. But this was the period when she found her way into the songs, and she brought her world with her, you know?

ABOVE LEFT:

Benmont Tench and Howie Epstein, poolside.

ABOVE:

Tom, Jimmy Iovine, and Tony Dimitriades on June 6, 1980, leaving the ABC studios.

LEFT:

The Heartbreakers about to take flight on the tour supporting Long After Dark, *1982.*

The song "Southern Accents" is one of my best, I think. It's not the kind of song that will go over as big in, say, Buffalo or Boston as it will in the South, where the emotional connection will propel it. Johnny Cash recorded that song, and he actually told me this could be a better song than "Dixie," that it could replace "Dixie." Few comments have meant as much as that one from Johnny.

It's very personal in so many ways, so I wrote it using characters—one guy is a migrant worker and one is working in the orange fields in Orlando—maybe just to give me a little distance from it. There's nothing wrong with this song, nothing I would change. For my money it's the best bridge I've ever written. It's hard to write a bridge. We call it a middle 8. We used to hear the Beatles call them middle 8s, though they're not always eight bars. It's the part of the tune where you go somewhere else—it's not a verse and it's not a chorus—and then you return, and the song, hopefully, resonates in a new way. I've learned over the years if you haven't written a great bridge, then don't write one. It's got to be as good as the chorus and the verse, or there's no reason to do it. On that bridge, it's almost like the narrator drifts off into a place of very high, even mystical emotion. It provides a kind of road sign to that last, very personal verse.

ABOVE:

Tom's mother, Katherine Petty.

FOLLOWING PAGES:

The Heartbreakers in 1984. From left: Mike, Howie Epstein, Benmont, Stan, Tom.

Bill Flanagan: The song about his mother coming to him in a dream is just some of his most beautiful lyric writing. The guy, the guy could have been Tennessee Williams if he had been born in a different town, with a different sexual inclination.

Tom Petty: Initially I recorded "Southern Accents" with just the piano, Stan playing cross stick on the snare drum, and maybe there was a bass. Very empty. It was so obviously a kind of centerpiece to the album, the thematic and emotional heart of the thing, that I thought maybe instead of putting guitars on it we should bring in an orchestra. The song seemed cinematic, like it needed a score. I was lucky to find Jack Nitzsche, who was available. He had done a lot of movie scores, had worked with Neil Young, had done all the arrangements for Phil Spector back in the '60s. He was my first choice, so he came over and listened to the track, and said, "I can do it." A few days later he showed up with a score.

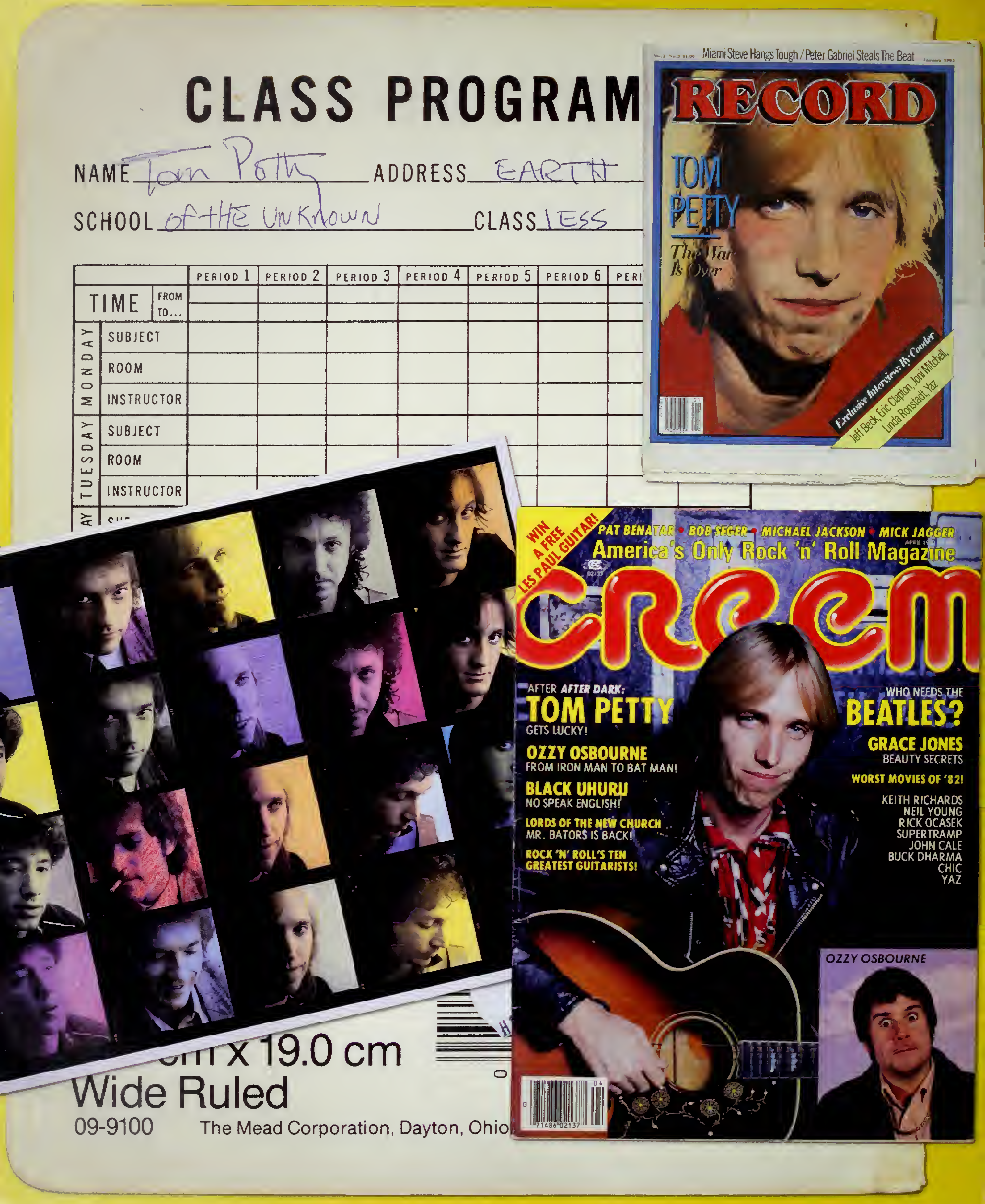
We went to the Capitol studios. In the basement studio, where Sinatra used to cut, we brought in the orchestra, with Jack conducting. I still think it's one of our best tracks. It was very exciting to see it go down. After one take I said, "Let's overdub it," and Jack whirled around, looked at me, went shhhh, and said, "You'll have to pay everyone again if you say overdub—just say we're going to do another take." So we kept the two takes of orchestra and made it really big.

THE BIG BREAK

Tom Petty: A song called "Rebels" opens that album.

Benmont Tench: "Honey don't walk out, I'm too drunk to follow." It's as good a line as you'll find in any rock-and-roll song, certainly. The whole song is in that line. It's just wonderful, just wonderful.

Tom Petty: The voice belongs to this redneck who's coming to terms with his heritage. I really wanted it to be right, and it was the simplest thing. We worked on it for months. I made a demo track when I wrote it, and we spent all this time trying to get the horn arrangement right and the mix right. It wasn't coming. *Southern Accents* was a damn tough record to make. We were off the road for the first time in years, and there were a lot of drugs around. . . . God, we wreaked havoc. Had nothing to do and a lot of money to get into a lot of trouble. Some really bad behavior. Personally, I think I just got kind of lost. I was making a record, but I couldn't keep up with myself. I started without Iovine, trying to produce it myself. Mike and I were going to do it, and that


CLASS PROGRAM
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The War Is Over
Exclusive Interviews: Ry Cooder
Jeff Beck, Eric Clapton, Joni Mitchell, Linda Ronstadt, Yaz
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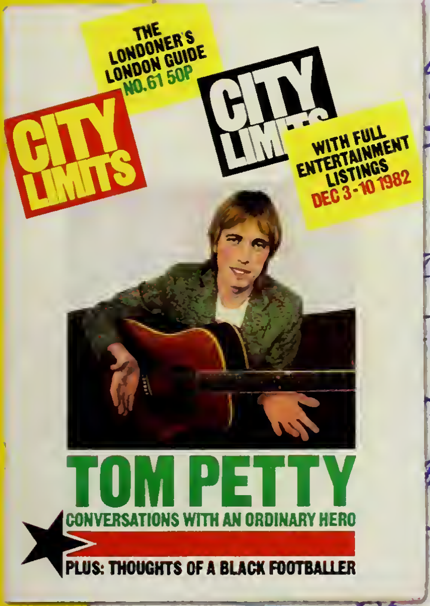
CREEM
AFTER AFTER DARK:
TOM PETTY
GETS LUCKY!
OZZY OSBOURNE
FROM IRON MAN TO BAT MAN!
BLACK UHURU
NO SPEAK ENGLISH!
LORDS OF THE NEW CHURCH
MR. BATORS IS BACK!
ROCK 'N' ROLL'S TEN GREATEST GUITARISTS!
WHO NEEDS THE BEATLES?
GRACE JONES
BEAUTY SECRETS
WORST MOVIES OF '82!
KEITH RICHARDS
NEIL YOUNG
RIC OCASEK
SUPERTRAMP
JOHN CALE
BUCK DHARMA
CHIC
YAZ
OZZY OSBOURNE

Straight into darkness
Tom Petty

There was a little girl, I used to know her
I still think about her, time to time
There was a moment when I really loved her
then one day the feeling just died

We went straight into darkness
out over the line
yeah



KODAK SAFETY FILM 6017

was a joke. We couldn't police ourselves. We would listen to a producer because there was some level of authority there. But without the producer, we lost our efficiency. We were starting to whoop it up.

We're trying to get "Rebels" to sound like it did in our heads. And we're not getting it. At one point I went into the next room and saw the "Rebels" demo tape, put it on, and damn, it was so much better than the version we were working on that I got furious. I was furious with myself. I went walking up the stairs—this was in my home studio—and I went up the staircase just to get out of the house because I was so frustrated. I took my hand and smacked the wall really hard. I don't know what made me do that, but I must have been really mad because I pulverized my hand. I didn't just break it, I powdered it—the bone went to powder. It was very painful. The next thing I know, I've got this Mickey Mouse hand and I went to the emergency room.

Dave Stewart: There was a lot of tension in the house, upstairs and downstairs. I think Tom was getting it from all sides and just exploded.

Stevie Nicks: I know a few guys who have done that.

Jim Lenehan: He got pissed off about something and punched the wall. We all do dumb things like that.

Mike Campbell: I remember the day it happened. It was when I had gotten the mix for "The Boys of Summer," a song that I had done with Don Henley. I brought it to the studio that day and said, "Oh, check this out." He sat there and listened to it. I don't know what was going through his head. But as soon as it was over he went up and put his hand through the wall. It could just be a coincidence.

Elliot Roberts: He punched the wall, okay? The wall deserved whatever it got.

Tom Petty: Eventually, I went through a long operation where they put metal in my hand and rebuilt it with metal and wire and studs. It was really incredible. Nine or ten years ago I cracked my forearm and they had to X-ray it. When they saw my hand, they were bringing in doctors from all over the place, going, "You've got to see this. Come in here and take a look at this hand." The doctors were amazed at how they rebuilt it.

I really sobered up after that. It was a huge wake-up call. My life changed. We all cleaned up, brought in Jimmy Iovine to help us finish the record, and got down to business. I had intended it to be a double album, but Jimmy came in and said there's no way you have a double album here. His suggestion was to make a record out of what we had, which was a good idea. It came out good. I was pleased when it was done. It's pretty typical that once a record is released I really let go of it. I've heard it so much at that point, and it belongs to others by that time. So I haven't heard *Southern Accents* in a long, long time. But people keep buying that one. Something special happened there.

FOLLOWING PAGES:

The US Festival. The Heartbreakers' biggest gig to date, with over 300,000 in attendance.

Chapter Five/ Seeing Music

I remember Mad *magazine used to have pictures of a sort of rock-and-roll guy. He had the ornate guitar, the pompadour, and pointy shoes. I thought, "Well, that clearly must be a rock-and-roller."*

Tom Petty: Music has never been simply a sound experience. At least in my time. It's a visual thing, too. Rock and roll without the visual component wouldn't be near as much fun. From my earliest days I had a picture of what a rock-and-roller was. I remember *Mad* magazine used to have pictures of a sort of rock-and-roll guy. He had the ornate guitar, the pompadour, and pointy shoes. I thought, "Well, that clearly must be a rock-and-roller."

The more I listened, though, the more I wanted particulars. I definitely remember when I was young, just starving for photographs of the bands I loved. Whatever I could find. It was all part of trying to get behind the mystery of this powerful music. It's amazing how long we stared at album covers, getting more and more out of them. The Beatles really took the art of it to new places with *Revolver*, *Sgt. Pepper,* and after that. I really absorbed the look of the performers I dug. The music hooked you, but the images deepened the relationship. I've always admired a band like the Rolling Stones with their sophisticated visual sense. Albums like *Exile On Main Street* and *Sticky Fingers* had a real strong look to them. It wasn't that the images answered the questions, they generated more questions. In the best case, the pictures made you want to dig deeper, back into the music.

This isn't to say that music couldn't work without the visual part of the equation. There's plenty of great music, Robert Johnson, for instance, that predates what I'm talking about here. But, for my generation, there's a tremendous amount of image materials that bands need to think about. I really learned about that just by being a fan myself. I used to think that I knew the guys I was listening to, and that I was going through their lives with them. I had a picture in my mind of who I was listening to. I always liked that.

Denny Cordell, once again, did some subliminal work when it came to me thinking more visually. He always wanted us to know more, to have a broader outlook than just the record we were making. Once he took me to an art exhibition in the middle of a session. It was the strangest thing in the world. We took a break and he said, "Come on. I want you to go with me and see these pictures." I thought it was really odd, but I trusted his instincts. We went over to this gallery and looked at these paintings. He was a very cryptic fellow. At all times he was very

cryptic. He said something like, "You know, if you could get these colors into the track—you see how these colors have blended? Well, that's what we want to do with this record. We want to get these particular colors and blend them." I said okay, but I really didn't have any idea how that was going to happen. I'll tell you what, though, I went back to the session feeling a little bit more like an artist. I think that kind of encounter made me take the visual part seriously.

There was never any resistance on my part to seeing what we could do with images, still or moving. It all seemed like, if we did it right, it could be an extension of the music.

Elliot Roberts: Tom was one of the handful of artists I've worked with—Devo comes to mind, the Cars come to mind—who were very open to video when it first started. Tom was in that first class of artists. He was always visually open to it.

Tom Petty: We had made what we called promo clips, three or four of these things where you'd see us lip-synching the song. We sent them out to the *Merv Griffin Show* that we didn't want to do, or some other program. When we made the "You Got Lucky" film, it turned out to be a huge MTV track, though we had not, believe it or not, seen MTV at that time. They didn't get MTV in Los Angeles until, I think it was '82 or '83. I had never seen MTV, just heard about it. Jim Lenehan and I brainstormed the idea one day. We were going to make a promo clip for "You Got Lucky," and I didn't want to lip-synch it. I asked Jim, "What if we made a little movie?" We made this kind of science fiction western for real cheap. In those days you could hustle up something for not a lot of money. It worked beautifully. We had a little intro on the beginning that I scored, and I'm sure that it was the first video that had an intro like that on it. That wasn't common then, though it became common.

Next thing we know, people everywhere are recognizing us. Not just me, but all of us were getting this. People would say, "Oh, we saw the thing with you in the desert," or "I saw you on the motor bike." I started realizing that a lot of people are seeing this. When we finally did see MTV, it all made sense to us.

Jim Lenehan: We looked at it as guerrilla filmmaking. I was into that, you know? I wanted to direct like everybody wanted to direct. I thought—and I still think—that one of the best people to direct a visual representation of a band is somebody who absolutely knows that music upside down, inside out, backward and forward. That's the lighting guy, because he's got to hit those cues live. He's got to know what that song is doing, where it's going. When we started doing it we would get mad if someone called it a video. We didn't shoot this on videotape! This is a film! We are making films. We'd go out and steal locations. Grab it before somebody asked if we had a permit and things like that. We made "Woman In Love," "The Waiting," " Insider," "Stop Draggin' My Heart Around," "Letting You Go." Those were the first ones that I directed.

LEFT:

Making videos in the early 1980s. At bottom, Ron and Stan are joined by Alan "Bugs" Weidel.

Tom Petty: MTV was a different thing then. It was exciting because it was so brand new, and they were starved for product. We sent them old clips, and they played them over and over again. They were never meant to be seen in that way, but they worked. That kicked off our thing with MTV in a big way, and it went on for years and years. Eventually it became a matter of trying to make a clever video for each release. I liked it. I liked the whole idea of being on the set and watching how it was done, how it was lit. I learned about editing. The whole idea of making these little movies was fascinating to me.

Bill Flanagan: A while back Tom was given the Video Vanguard Award at the MTV Music Awards. He was consistently creative in his videos. By the time MTV had been around for, let's say, twenty years, Tom and U2 and Madonna were probably the only three artists who were still around, who had been important young video artists when the channel began and were still important video artists at that time. That's completely unique.

Tom Petty: There are a number of my videos that I really like, but as a songwriter I also recognize the problems that the medium brings with it. It bugs me that these images would get fixed in people's minds. They weren't creating the images themselves—they were getting them from MTV. That was the bind I always found myself in. How could I make a video that had a little ambiguity to it? This wasn't easy. You had to tax your imagination to come up with another four-minute film for another new release. I got frustrated with it after a while—had to ask myself if we really had to put out a video for each release. But we did. Because all of a sudden the biggest radio station was the TV.

Jackson Browne: Tom was very good in videos. He really made great videos and was on MTV a lot. Just in terms of how the business worked, that was a very important thing for him to continue getting a younger audience and for him to keep an audience that was kind of moving into a whole different way of getting into rock and roll. I don't think you can find anybody that has a TV that hasn't seen Tom's videos.

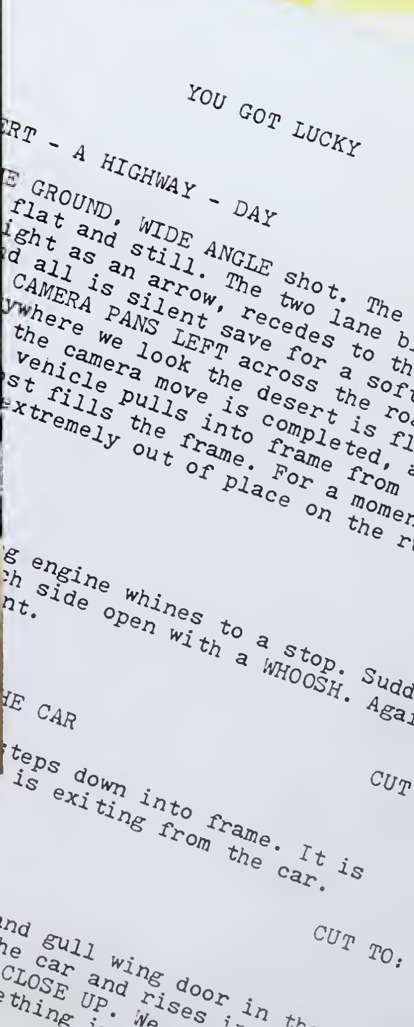
Tom Petty: The key for a rock-and-roll band is to keep changing and to keep moving. With us, we were lucky, really, that that kept happening, because, truthfully, we were just a five-piece rock-and-roll band. There wasn't a lot to be spelled out about it. It was just a five-piece rock-and-roll band. We were really about music but had to learn how to present that in many ways. The videos were one way to keep the image changing or keep the imagery changing. It became a significant part of our process.

FACING AND FOLLOWING PAGES:
The Heartbreakers with Stevie Nicks on the set of the "Insider" video, 1981.

Filming the "You Got Lucky" video, 1982.

FOLLOWING PAGES:

On the set of "Learning To Fly," 1991.


YOU GOT LUCKY

ERT - A HIGHWAY - DAY

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5 MEDIUM SHOT OF MIKE

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On the set of "Don't Come Around Here No More," 1985

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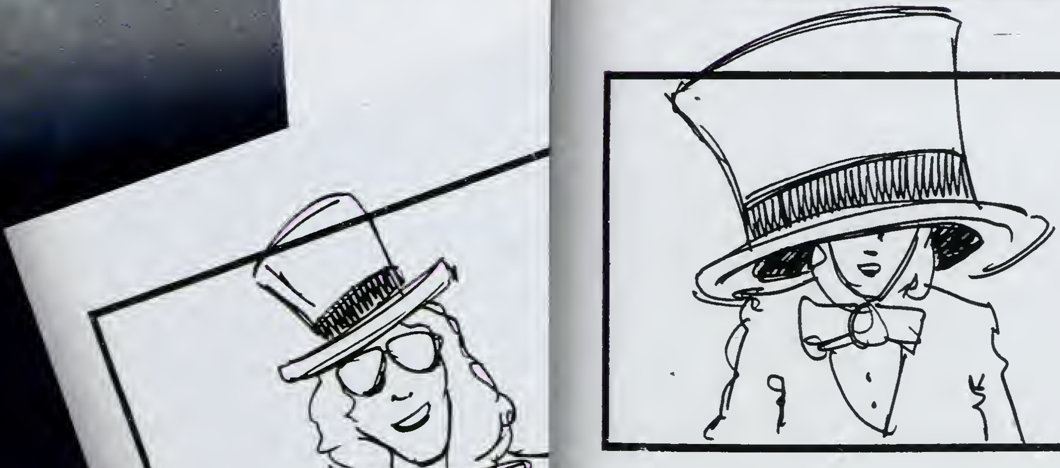

Tom's hat is now enorm

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Tom and Johnny Depp filming "Into The Great Wide Open," 1991

ABOVE:

From the music video for "I Won't Back Down," 1989. From left: Ringo Starr, Jeff Lynne, Tom, George Harrison, Mike Campbell.

OPPOSITE:

Tom with Kim Basinger on the set of "Mary Jane's Last Dance," 1993.

On the set of the "Saving Grace" video. 2006.

Chapter Six/ Back There With the Band

Dylan and I were talking about when he had a band, when he had the Band, and how he felt when he was playing with an actual group and not just a loose affiliation of desperate musicians. And I said that the only band I could think of that might be a band like that for him again would be Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers. (Dave Stewart)

BOB

Tom Petty: Around 1986 we started playing with Bob Dylan. Benmont had been working on a track or two with Bob, and then Mike ended up going down and playing, followed by Howie. A gradual migration of Heartbreakers. Around that time Bob had a show, the first Farm Aid show. He wanted to play with a group, play with an electric band, so he approached us. We were more than happy to do it. Bob hadn't worked with an actual band since he worked with the Band way back when.

The Heartbreakers could cover a lot of instruments. I'd play the bass when Howie played the lap steel. Mike played mandolin. We could pretty much give Bob what he wanted. Every one of us admired him so much. So we got together and rehearsed quite a few songs for Farm Aid, more than we needed for the show. The chemistry was quickly apparent. Elliot Roberts helped set that up.

Elliot Roberts: I don't think the whole thing took more than eleven or twelve minutes. Bob said something to me. I said something to Tom. I called Bob back. It was done.

Dave Stewart: Dylan and I were talking about when he had a band, when he had the Band, and how he felt when he was playing with an actual group and not just a loose affiliation of desperate musicians. And I said that the only band I could think of that might be a band like that for him again would be Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers.

Tom Petty: The show went out on TV and went really well onstage. That night in the dressing room Bob suggests a tour. That was easy. Let's go. We did Australia and New Zealand, and it just kept going on from there. How about America? So we did America. What do you think about going to Europe and Japan? Israel, Egypt? We did all that, and it took us through 1987. We also did a short U.S. tour on our own in that time period and recorded *Let Me Up (I've Had Enough)*. I remember the Dylan period being more fun than we'd had in a while. We were happy.

The Heartbreakers got plenty of time in the Dylan shows to do our own stuff, so we didn't worry about that. We all came on together in the first part of the show, and then Bob would take a break and the Heartbreakers would stay up there. We loved it, just thought it was fantastic and wanted to do our best for Bob. He was a great influence on the Heartbreakers, and we came out of it a better band. It couldn't have hurt that we felt like the hottest spotlights were off of us and onto Bob. A little pressure was released.

For me, as a bandleader there was a lot to be drawn from his approach. The way he'd rehearse, for instance. We adapted a lot of that into the way

The best songs in the folk tradition are kind of there for everybody, meant to be passed around. And Dylan's songs are the same. If the Grateful Dead wanted to play one of his songs for fifteen minutes, it would probably work. If almost any artist wanted to take it and do it their way, there's a good chance it might work. I don't know many writers you can say that about. I don't think the Beatles' music is durable in that same way—it's some of the best music ever made—but I never really liked people covering Beatles' songs very much. I can count the cover versions I really liked on one hand. Not so with Dylan's material. That's part of why his music is so interesting when you put it in a rock context, because it comes from that folk tradition. You start to realize as you listen to him that he's part of a tradition that leads back to what Howlin' Wolf was doing or Muddy Waters.

OPPOSITE:

Tom with Bob Dylan on the True Confessions tour, 1986.

we've rehearsed ever since. Things weren't really spelled out. He would play a song, give us a sense for the feel of it, and we'd follow him. We knew the changes, or he'd show us the changes on the spot. The next day we might try it with a different feel. Or maybe he would call out "Tears Of A Clown" or " Come Together." There wasn't any labored discussion about it, and sometimes you would be like, "That was a great song. What was that?" And he would fill us in. I may never have heard it, but we were playing it. We didn't dwell on a song for a long time, risking fatigue or boredom. Some groups will approach a song and take it apart, spend two hours on it, beat it to death. We just don't do that, and I think that's something we got right around that period, when we learned you don't have to do that.

A lot of Bob's approach comes from his folk background. In the folk world there is less emphasis on playing a song with the same feel every time you do it. More than that, it's typically you and a guitar—you can easily change the feel, play an extra bar, modify the tempo. I think that approach is still very much with Bob, even when a band is behind him. It's a great way to keep the life in music. We got really confident that we could be there, whatever he wanted we could be there, and the moments when the audience is really getting off are earned. There's nothing automatic about it. He really earns it, has the courage to just go for it.

WATCHING THE FRONTMAN

Roger McGuinn: [Dylan] is capable of changing the time signature and the melody and just about everything in the song except the title . . . and you're supposed to stay with him.

Mike Campbell: The Dylan period was incredible for the Heartbreakers because it happened at a time when the band was very bored with each other. That gave us something to do that wasn't just being Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers. I wouldn't take that back for anything. It was backing up this guy that we loved. It kind of restarted the band's juices flowing. Just playing with him was probably some of the most crazy and enjoyable times I've ever had playing live. Because it was so much anarchy, you know? Compared to when our band plays. In fact, we learned some of that from him. We brought a little anarchy back to our trip.

Tom Petty: I don't think he threw us curveballs that much. Sometimes we might play something in a different key but that didn't really baffle us. I mean, it was going to be in a D instead of an E? Or he might say tonight this song's going to be a shuffle instead of a straight beat. Good enough. It made us bold, and we weren't scared to try it and we did it. I enjoyed it. I thought the whole thing was great.

Elliot Roberts: You had to watch him like a hawk.

Steve Ferrone: I've worked with a lot of people, and you've got to keep a close eye on all of them. If you're working with Ray Charles, you better keep a close eye on him. He will yell at a drummer. He loves yelling at a drummer. He yelled at me in front of the whole country, at Clinton's inaugural. That was because I couldn't see him. I couldn't see him. You have to watch his shoulders. All I could see was his legs. And all his legs do, his legs just sort of fly around. They had nothing to do with anything. So I went running over to Ray, and I say, "Ray, Ray, this is Steve. You got to bear with me, man. I can't see you." And Ray said, "I can't see you either, motherfucker."

Tom Petty: At the end of the day, it was an education phase for us. We came out of it bolder. When we went back to play in our own shows, we weren't afraid to try something different. I came out of it better personally because I'd never been behind a singer. For me it was a real eye-opener just seeing what goes on with the guy in front. We also learned how to take a song and make it work. Songs didn't necessarily need to be built on certain parts or rigid structures. We came to see that the songs that were really good always had a number of

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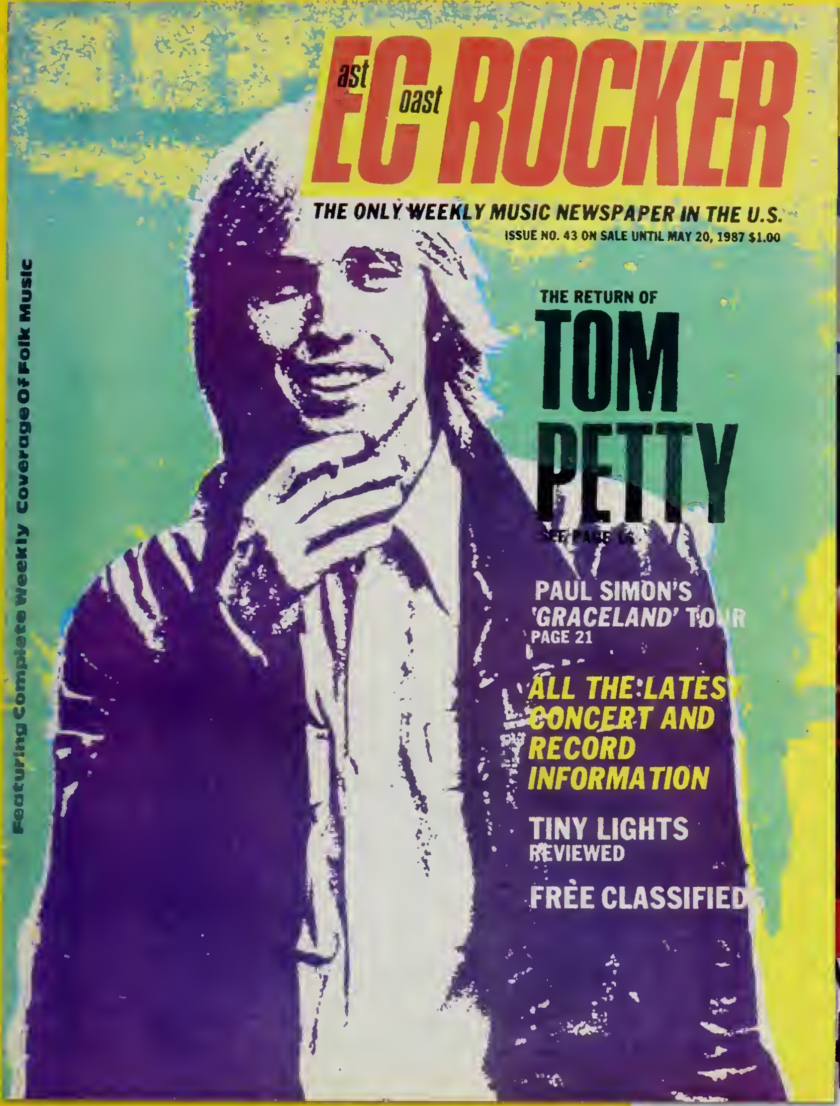
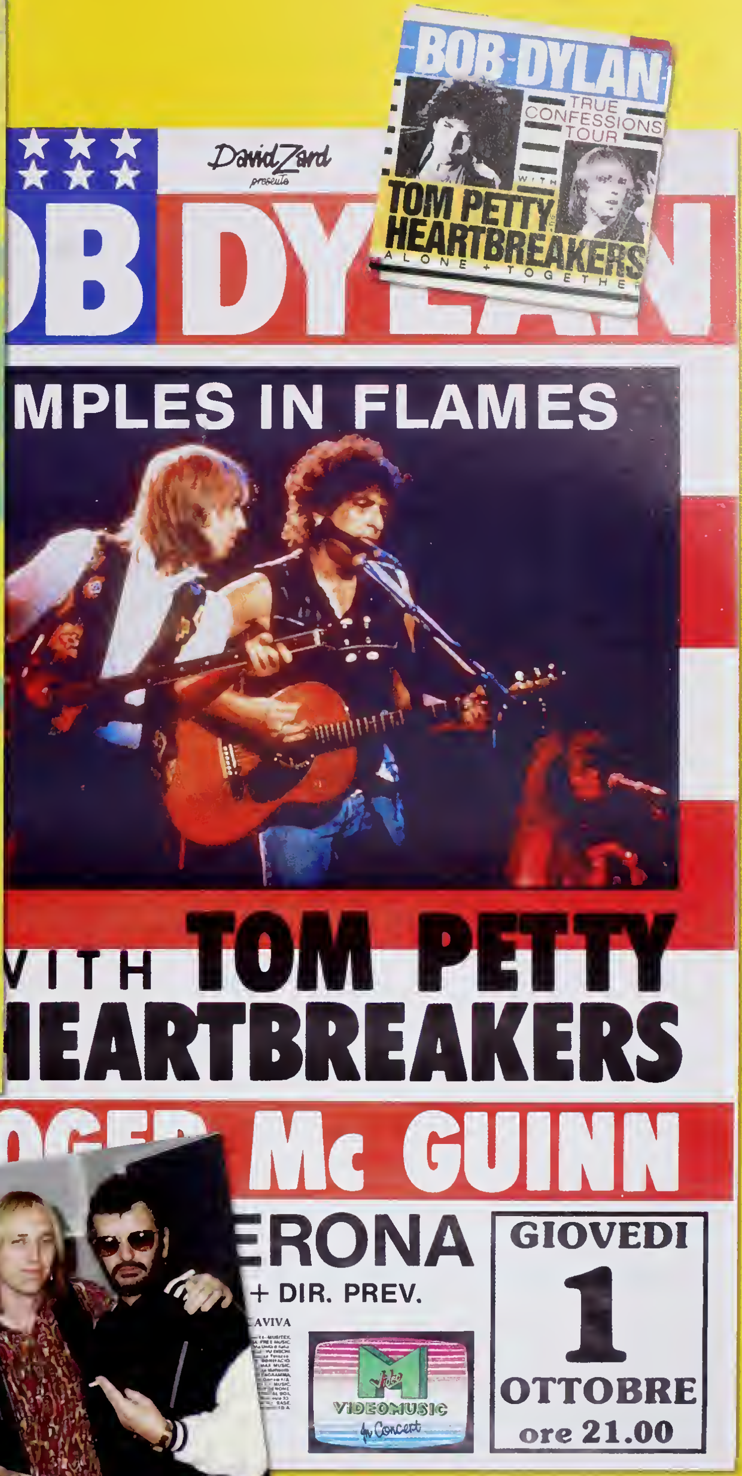
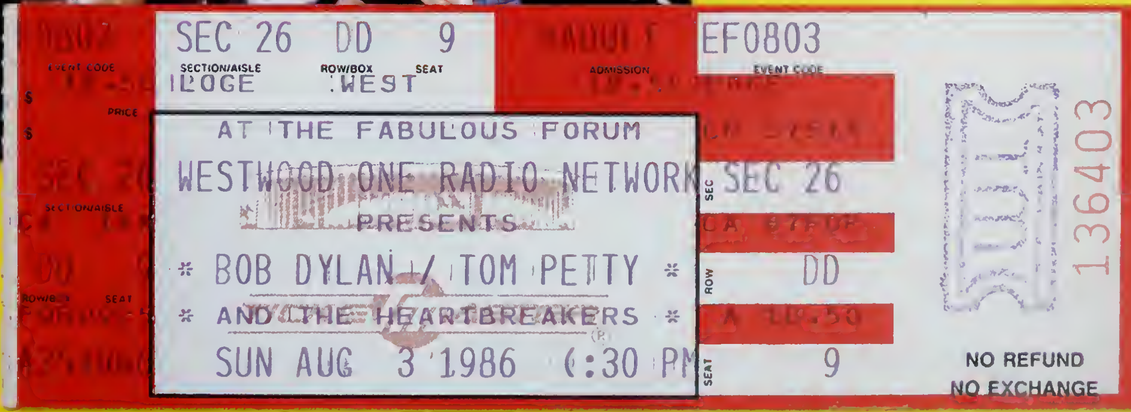






ABOVE RIGHT:

George Harrison, Roger McGuinn, Tom, and Ringo Starr, circa 1986.

ways to interpret them. Bob has a lot of spontaneity in what he does. He likes it to be very fresh. I've heard people say, geez, with Bob you never know what he's going to do. But we rehearsed and pretty much knew what he was going to do at shows. Life couldn't have been better. It was another really good adventure for us. McGuinn was on part of the tour. There was a lot of fun to be had.

Roger McGuinn: The band and Tom would come out, and we all did "So You Want To Be A Rock 'N' Roll Star" and "Eight Miles High," "Turn, Turn, Turn," "Mr. Tambourine Man." The Byrds classics. And it sounded better than the Byrds.

Tony Dimitriades: They learned to be a great band, no doubt about it. They already were a great band, but they learned to be a great band for a whole new generation.

Benmont Tench: Tom had always been the frontman. He was the rhythm guitar player. With Dylan we had the three-guitar attack. It was great. So Tom got to find out what that was like, to be in the band. That must have been fun.

Tom Petty: There's a different camaraderie in the backline, and they sort of welcomed me in, in a way. I think they also enjoyed seeing me struggle with it a little bit. Like if something came up and I didn't know the key or the chords, there would be a few laughs before they would give it to me. "Aw, you didn't do your homework, did you? You don't know the chords. . . . Okay, it's in A." There's a different feeling back there. I got put in the band for a minute, and it was a good feeling.

WELL, IT CAN GET YOU IN THE BACK, BOY, OR YOU CAN LIE AROUND IN ROSES

Benmont Tench: [Playing with Dylan] was alternately amazing and frustrating, and sometimes on the same night. I thought it did wonders for playing with the band. It knit us together. Made us looser. You had to improvise. Boy, I wouldn't trade that. In the course of this we recorded the *Let Me Up (I've Had Enough)* album, at least the rocking part of the album.

Tom Petty: We had the stuff that Mike wrote, which was a little more produced because he worked on it a lot, and the material that I wrote on my own, which was almost improvised in the studio. Very much improvised. Some of them were first takes, and I was still writing the song at the time. I would just make it up as I went along—if it was good, that was it. We were just getting back to something more simple, peeling back a couple of layers. I was probably in that mindset because of the liberation I felt during the time we worked with Dylan. That fired me up.

I was just going right off the top of my head, calling out chords. On the rough mixes you can actually hear me shouting out the changes. This

doesn't always work. But it's not always the songs you labor over that come out best. One example of a later song that was ad-libbed top to bottom was "Wildflowers." That was right off the top of my head. Plugged in, set out the mic, took the guitar, and kabang, I sang every word of it and played every chord and then sort of wondered how it happened. Part of my process is that I picture music in my head. I can see something. Getting it to reality is another thing. That's not as easy. Sometimes the really, really great ones come very fast, almost appear there. They were there before I knew it.

Tony Dimitriades: I think that when Tom went into the studio and worked with the band and tried to cut everything virtually live it was an attempt on his part to give the band what they wanted. We are a band. We don't have other people coming in here and helping us write the songs and arrange them. You know, we're a band. Let's go back to the basics—and Tom did that with them. And that was not a good-selling album.

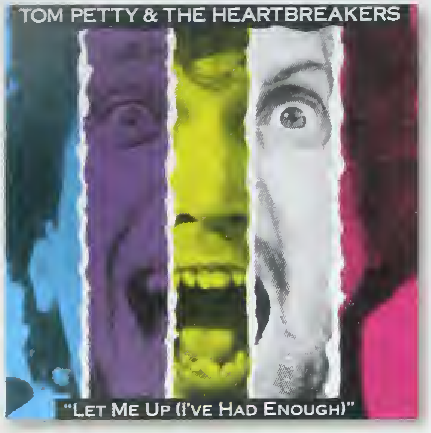
Tom Petty: The songs Mike brought in for *Let Me Up*— "Runaway Trains," "My Life/Your World," and "All Mixed Up"—were tracks Mike delivered pretty complete, minus the vocal. Since his approach was very different from mine, you can hear two different worlds on that record. But I feel like we found a sequence that brought it all together. This was definitely a period in which my relationship with Mike continued to grow. He was already being credited as a producer on certain *Southern Accents* tracks. With *Let Me Up* it was the one time we were listed as the coproducers.

Mike Campbell: Benmont hates "My Life/Your World." He said that sounds like Michael Jackson.

Tom Petty: "Jammin' Me" is a Mike Campbell track. I wrote the lyrics with Bob Dylan at the Sunset Marquis. We wrote a couple of songs at that time, one that went on his record and one that went on ours. Bob and I pored over a newspaper, appropriating the lyrics. Then I took the lyrics I'd written with Bob and put them to a track that Mike had put together. It came out pretty well and was a hit for us.

Mike Campbell: I never even sat with Bob when he was doing it. Later on I saw him. I said thanks for writing those words to my music.

Tom Petty: Mike and I have a lot of the same influences, the same musical tastes. We've grown up together. I'd say 80 percent of all I know about the guitar has been taught to me by him. I've learned everything from him. He's a natural player. He doesn't promote himself in this way, but I'm sure he could shut down most of the guitar heroes. Mutual respect cements our relationship. We've written a lot of songs together that were really good, and I think when I'm not around, he's probably the one that everyone defers



to. He's the cocaptain. We don't see that much of each other these days. He's wrapped up in his life and I'm wrapped up in mine. We've grown up, and we've got families and our own set of responsibilities, but I can always count on him to be there for me and he knows he can count on me to be there for him, musically or otherwise. I don't think my music would have come out nearly as good without him. Without him or Ben, really. I don't think that what I do would have been as good as it has been without them. They played an enormous role in getting it over, getting what was in my head over to other people. But the playing field is level because I don't think they would have been around without me.

THE UNTHINKABLE

Tom Petty: I went through a terrible thing during the Dylan tour when someone burned my house down. We woke up one morning to a house on fire. It was a nightmare. Just a few feet from where one of my daughters was sleeping the fire started. We all survived, but the house didn't. I was told it was arson, and you could have knocked me down with a feather. Arson, are you sure? I just couldn't make any sense of that information. But they'd found that someone had cut a hole through the fence up on the hill and been hanging out for a while watching the house. It was a bad thing for the family.

Benmont Tench: I was asleep and the phone rang. There was supposed to be a party at their house that day. A friend of mine is on the line and says the house is burning. I went over to their hotel that night to see if they were okay, but they were in too much shell shock to even handle any visits. We left on tour within days.

Adria Petty: It was on my mother's birthday that the house burned down. All of these people were arriving for this party as the house burns down, walking up the driveway with gifts, not knowing what was going on. I remember my dad coming over and putting his arm around me. I started to cry, and he went, "Don't do that. This is no time for that. We need to be tough. We'll get through this together. We're all safe and that's all that matters." And I got it. It was true. It was only shit in the house. We're all we've got, and that was cool. I think it was a good moment because the family got very close. We got on that bus together and, you know what, we dealt with each other a little bit more than we did before.

Tom Petty: Then various people started to confess, not just one person but people across the United States. First some guys in New Jersey confessed. Then it becomes this copycat thing that really felt just too strange, too unnerving. It was one of those crazy things that happens to you and makes you aware that there's a lot of unbalanced activity out there, and you don't see it until it has happened. How can you not feel vulnerable? But the choice is to hang in fear, looking over your shoulder, or to start counting your blessings. It's not much of a choice, really.

Stevie Nicks: Everything that he had collected as a little kid, all that was gone. All of us in the business that knew him and knew about it, it scared us all because why in the world would anyone do that, especially to somebody like Tom Petty, who's just cool, you know? He's just a cool guy who makes cool music, and he had no enemies.

Tom Petty: I spent a lot of time trying to figure it out, but I realized I couldn't. That's the hardest thing, realizing that somebody did it. Did somebody really? I kept thinking it must be a mistake—I mean, it must be a mistake. It must be the wiring or something and they're wrong. But they showed me that they were right, that someone did pour gasoline and light it on fire around the house. Damn, I don't know, I don't dwell on it much—I did wonder about who did it, but I will never know. The impulse is to use reason to understand something that lives beyond reason. It's the lunatic fringe. That's why you wind up having security guards and extra weight

that you don't have in normal life. You have to keep your eyes open, but you can't live in fear. If I do that, then they've won.

Here's one thing I try to remember: I saw Annie Lennox, Dave Stewart's partner in the Eurythmics. I saw her turn up briefly when they were fighting the fire. I remember seeing her out of the corner of my eye. At the end of the day, when we got to the hotel, Annie was there and had bought everyone a new wardrobe. Kind of broke me up. She had gone out and bought me shoes, bought me a coat, basically everything you would need to get by. When my mind drifts toward the negative, the how-could-this-happen line of thinking, I pull that image up. It's more lasting. It's more crucial.

TEMPORARY HOUSING

Tom Petty: After the fire, somewhere in the middle of the *Let Me Up* tour and the last Dylan run, my family moved to the other side of the hill. Frankly, because of the fire we moved to the other side of the hill. In hindsight it feels like one of those life lessons, that good things come of even the worst you can imagine. It was a strange time, to say the least. The fire. The Heartbreakers tour, with family in tow. An overseas adventure supporting Dylan that took us to Israel, Scandinavia, most of Europe. I'm guessing that all of the activity helped to distract me from the cold, hard fact of arson. Distraction or not, though, it was obvious that eventually I'd need to stop, to create a new place to call home. That's just what I did. After the Dylan tour ended with a string of shows in England, it was back to the States again, with no sense for what was to come next. No master plan. As it happened, I was thrown into one of the most artistically fulfilling, one of the lightest in spirit, and certainly one of the most unexpected periods in my life. Moving to the other side of the hill put me right into George Harrison and Jeff Lynne's neighborhood, right where I needed to be. Here I'd lost everything I owned some months before. I remember the fire—we were supposed to be having a party that day. I can still see the people arriving and the hoses blasting water. And I didn't even have shoes to wear. A moment like that isn't the one when you're thinking, "Soon I'll enter into one of the most magical times in my life." And then, wonderfully, that's just what happens. It's worth remembering that it can work that way.

Chapter Seven/ On the Other Side of the Hill

I was the youngest one, the kid in the group. And that was kind of fun because I had admired all those guys when I was very young. They were gods to me.

STRANGE WEATHER

Tom Petty: We were in England on the Dylan tour and played Birmingham, after which we were in London for almost a week. George Harrison and Jeff Lynne came to all the shows and hung out, and we all got to be friendly. We made plans to hook up later. Jeff had just finished a record with George at the time so they gave me a copy. On one of the last nights in London, I think, my life changed. We were there with Bob, of course, and there was a long party afterward, and George, Derek Taylor, Ringo, Jeff Lynne, all these people got in this room backstage and just had the best time. We were laughing and drinking and never had such fun.

Then I went home to my room that night and a hurricane hit London, with no warning. There was no warning at all. Meteorologists hadn't predicted anything like this. I didn't know hurricanes hit England. Well one damn sure hit London that night. I remember getting up in the night, hearing the rain hitting the window and thinking, "Man, it really rains here in England." And then I walked out in the morning and huge oaks were toppled. The hurricane came through, wreaked havoc, and moved on. But after the fact I thought, "You know, ever since that hurricane things have been different." Fate is a funny thing. You don't always get a signal. But I sure felt a signal around that time, just a positive buzz running underneath a lot of what was going on.

The Dylan tour ended and we all went back home. When I was home I played the tape that George and Jeff had given me and really liked the production of the record. I thought it was great. That was, of course, *Cloud Nine*, which went on to be a big record for George. But I wasn't home for a week when I ran into Jeff Lynne at a stoplight in Beverly Hills. We'd just been in London together days before, so we were kind of shocked to see each other. He said he was in town doing a track with Brian Wilson and was going into the studio but that he lived just up the road. Of course, now I was on that side of the hill as well. I was renting a house in Beverly Hills. Jeff suggested that we get together because he would be there for the holidays and didn't know anybody. I told him he had to come over. And that was that.

A few days later I was out with my daughter Adria, and we were passing a French restaurant that she and I used to go to on special occasions. She said something like, "Gosh, wouldn't it be great if you could have lunch there?" I said, "You can have lunch there, watch." I pulled in and enjoyed exciting Adria with a bit of spontaneity. We ordered lunch, and while we were eating, the maitre d' came over and explained that a friend of mine was in the next room and wondered if I would come in and say hello. I walked in the next room and there were George Harrison and Jeff Lynne. George holds up his little pad of paper and said, "Look at this, I was just getting your number from Jeff when someone told me you were sitting in the next room." George asked what we were doing right at the moment, and I said we were going back home. "Well, can I come with you?" Sure.

So George came home with me and stayed the rest of the day, just playing guitar at the house. I thought this is wild, but we got along really good. We got along in an unusual way. So he would come back. In fact, he came back the next day and also came back for Christmas when we had a party.

Randall Marsh: We were such fans of the Beatles. And for Tom to hook up with George Harrison? I visited him sometimes in L.A. and would ask him to tell me about George. I would just go, "Tell me more. Tell me more."

Tom Petty: Then I think George went to Hawaii. When he came back we hung out some more. We had an immediate connection. We were really good friends and our families were friends. He brought the kids, and the kids formed lifetime friendships. It was a nice thing. Adria used to stay with George and his family at Friar Park. He told her something that he had never mentioned to me, which is that he had a cousin from Florida who reminded him of me. Before George was really settled at Friar Park, he and this Florida cousin would sleep in every room in this, well, this castle, trying to figure out which one had the best vibe and ought to be the bedroom.

Dave Stewart: The reason why I built a house and a studio in America, in Los Angeles, was because I became very good friends with Tom. I didn't really know anybody else. But he seemed so real. About four streets away I bought some property. George Harrison and his wife would stay there. I was also spending some time with Dylan. I seemed to have a link with Dylan and then Tom Petty. Then George Harrison. You could kind of see the Wilburys coming together. It was quite strange for me to suddenly realize that, one by one, they are in my house all of a sudden. And I saw these pictures of them sitting under the tree in my back garden. It was very surreal.

Tom Petty: It was an idea that George had for a long time. He talked about the Traveling Wilburys. It was just a conceptual band he envisioned, I guess because he was never really interested in being a solo act. You know, rather than being the guy up front he was a team player. He wanted to have a band. It was as simple as that. And if you're George, you get the best guys to be in your band. So, he had an extra track he needed to do for a B-side. He wrote a song, or most of a song, one night. And Jeff was having dinner with Roy Orbison around the same time. George and Jeff were going to record it at Bob's house, where Bob had a studio. It was all very last minute.

George used to store his guitar at my house so he didn't have to fly back and forth with it. He had a couple of guitars in my closet. He drove up one night to get his guitars and told me he had a session going down the next night with Roy Orbison and Jeff Lynne and would I like to come? I was wondering what I was going to do that night, and this certainly filled the bill for an evening's entertainment, you know?

True as his word, he picked me up and we drove up to Bob's house. Jeff and George had finished the music to this tune. Then Bob appeared and was interested in what was going on. So all of us sat down at dinner and over a meal worked out the lyrics of this song "Handle With Care." The title "Handle With Care" was taken off

The first time George Harrison came over to my house, when it was just the two of us there, the first thing he did was pick up the guitar and start to play "Norwegian Wood." I thought, "Well, this is unusual." George said something like, "You know this one, don't you?" It was a funny approach—I was obviously a huge Beatles fan—but he really had an uncanny ability to transcend the fact that he was a Beatle and get you to a place where you weren't thinking about that any more. We just started playing guitars after that.

OPPOSITE:

The Traveling Wilburys in 1988. From left: Bob Dylan, Tom, George Harrison, Jeff Lynne, Roy Orbison.

OPPOSITE:

George, Tom, Jeff, and Bob in the Wilbury Mountain kitchen, 1990.

a road case that was sitting in the garage. I remember Bob saying, "Well, what's it called, George?" George kind of looked around and said, "It's called 'Handle With Care.'" So that was the start.

Bruce Petty: I remember talking to Tom about the Wilburys and the fact that he was in a band with one of the Beatles. I just remember us laughing, like who would have thought that? Not us when we bought tickets at a Gainesville movie theater and stood in line to see *A Hard Day's Night.*

JOINING THE BAND

Tom Petty: The next thing I know, George came over one day and said, "I played the track to Warner Bros., and they said they think it's too good to be a B-side." He got the idea that maybe we could do nine more and we'd have an album—and we'd have a band.

Jeff Lynne: [George said], "We could have anybody." I'm going, "Really?" He said, "Yeah. I would have Bob Dylan. Let's get Bob Dylan in it." And I said, "Can we have Roy Orbison in it?" And that's what happened. And Tom, well, I was working with Tom at that time. We both loved Tom. So we add Tom in as well. And that was the Wilburys.

Tom Petty: We were off immediately to ask Roy Orbison if he would be in our band. We drove to Anaheim where he was performing. We went down and said, "Roy, we're going to start a band. Do you want to be in it?"

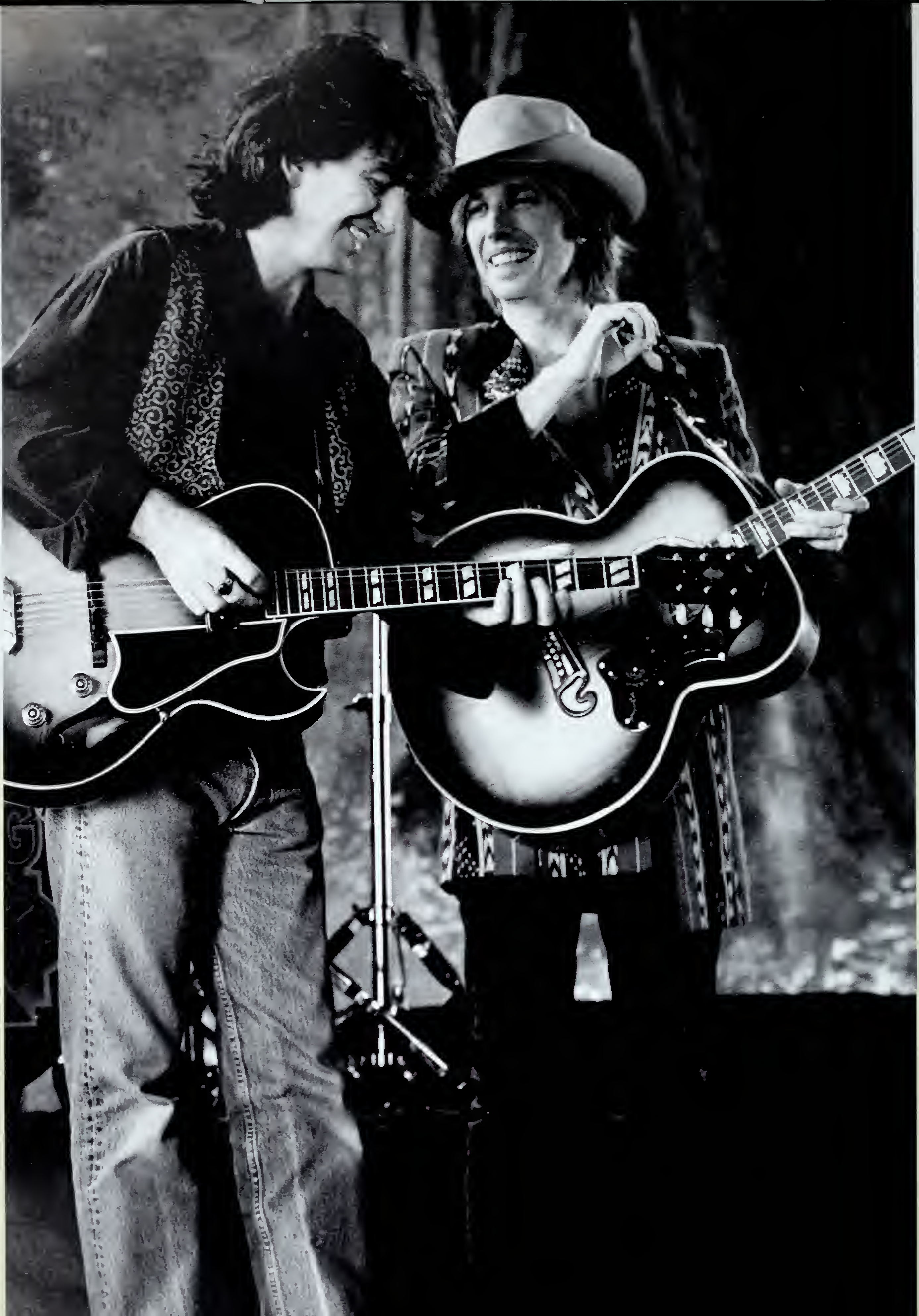
Roy says okay. George phoned Bob and the same thing, "Do you want to be in the band?" I think it was George who said. "We need a really good songwriter."

So Bob was in. I'd just been working with Bob, so that wasn't too unusual. But this period was just . . . it was the best time of my life. Just the best time. Some long-lasting friendships were born there. I was learning. In terms of creative work, I was having a ball. We were hanging out around the clock. But it was a good healthy party as opposed to a bad kind of thing. It was all healthy. It was a very special time in my life.

Denny Cordell: The Wilburys, I think, reenergized him. . . . He was reborn after that . . . right back on the horse.

Tom Leadon: I said, "God, Tom, you're playing with Bob Dylan and George Harrison."

Tom Petty: In the period before I discovered the Beatles, probably from the age eleven to thirteen or fourteen, I listened to '50s rock and roll. All that early Elvis, the first-generation rock-and-rollers. That music is really what connected me to the Wilburys. That's where we connected as friends, through my knowledge of this music. Bob, George, Roy, Jeff, they all came



When the Wilburys formed, we were all thrilled to be in a band with Roy Orbison. He was a really sweet person. I know that we never thought of putting anyone else in the band after his passing. We were a circle of friends, and had been for a while, and it would have been really awkward to bring somebody else in. There was no replacement for Roy.

Musically, the Wilburys really counted on Roy's voice as far as the vocal blend and the harmonies went. We knew that if we were to carry on we were going to have to get past that absence. I guess we kind of reconfigured what we did. Bob stepped up and sang a lot more lead than he had been. And I think that the second record is a little more rough and ready, a bit more raucous than the first one. But it's hard to really analyze Roy's absence and know exactly what it meant.

After Roy's passing and, later, after the release of the second Wilbury album, George never looked at it like we were going to break up, like it was over. The next phase was always a matter of trying to find a stretch of time when none of us were working. I think once we even had a rough schedule in place to go back and do more recording. I can't remember what got in the way. But George always talked about it and always considered us Wilburys.

The Wilbury's filming "She's My Baby" in 1990.

up through that music. Especially George, I'd say. It really meant a lot to him. I remember him being really, really amazed that I had a particular Gene Vincent album, one that had meant the world to him. He said, "Man, we learned every song on that album." And, you know, a lot of them aren't classic songs. But he knew every word. We actually learned that whole album. That was the jumping-off point of our friendship.

DAYCARE CENTERS AND NIGHT SCHOOLS

Tom Petty: I was the youngest one, the kid in the group. And that was kind of fun because I had admired all those guys when I was very young. They were gods to me. To be in the group was just a huge, very flattering thing, to be involved with that, to be there when it went down. I had to constantly tell myself, "You know you can't be a fan if you want to be any use to the band. You're going to have to get over that." And I did. I somehow got around that, and we all became friends. We all became pretty good friends. That wasn't so hard to get to eventually, but at first it was kind of staggering.

One comfort was the fact that it was the same with everybody there. I mean, everyone felt a bit the same way. They would be in awe of working with Bob Dylan. George was so in awe of Bob that I remember him saying to Bob on one of the very first days of work, he said, "We're going to treat you like everyone else, is that okay?" Bob says, "Yeah, it's fine." There was a lot of admiration that circulated, which made it all the more remarkable, you know? The plan we came up with was that we would all treat each other like equals, get right past any of that. We really wanted it to be a group in the way it worked. This wasn't a marketing plan. There were no record companies involved, no managers involved until that record was done. Nobody put us together. It wasn't something that somebody dreamed up, with all of us taking Wilbury names because we didn't want it to sound like Crosby, Stills & Nash. We simply didn't want it to sound like a law firm by putting all of our names up there. We didn't want it to be about that anyway, though of course that was unavoidable. What I'm saying is that it wasn't some manager's dream or some record company's dream. It was our dream.

Jeff Lynne: The Wilburys were five people from the first album, all on acoustic guitars, which is quite a sight, without even writing a song. Then to come up with a song . . . say Bob comes up with a few chords. Then George comes up with a few chords. I would come up with a couple of chords. Tom would. And it would be very much a creative thing and very loosely structured, until we lay down the track—with just a track of five acoustics. Sometimes we would doubletrack that, making it ten acoustics. It's very silly but so much fun. You know, anything would go in the Wilburys. At night we would sit down over dinner and write the lyrics. It was a very sweet way of doing it. We'd sing the lyrics after dinner. And that would be the record, roughly done and sung and played in one day. We did a song a day . . . twelve. A couple of weeks, basically.

Bill Flanagan: Tom Petty is a really, really good lyricist. I remember George Harrison saying that it was fantastic to be in the Traveling Wilburys because you had Tom Petty and Bob Dylan there. If you got stuck for a line, you had a very good chance of getting a great line to fill in the hole.

Tom Petty: Years later, much later on, when the record was a big success, Bob and I were talking about it and I said, "Do you believe how this thing went over?" He goes, "Well, George is really smart. He was in the Beatles, you know."

The Wilburys experience was definitely a rebirth. I felt like I landed in a new pond and things were really good. And they were for a long time after that. I arrived somewhere else. The Wilburys stayed together. Roy Orbison died right as the record was released. It was a terrible loss for all of us. But the band stayed together, and we went on to make another album, and always promised that we would do yet another one after that but we never got around to it.

A PLACE IN THE SUN

Tom Petty: I've said that this was a remarkable period for me. The feeling was light. The creative energy around me was as good as it gets. More than once people have said that they thought I was singing differently. Part of this, I think, had to do with Jeff Lynne's recordings. My voice is more out front than ever before. It's higher in the mix. Jeff likes a pretty dry vocal, which gives him more of a chance to make the vocal big. But I also think that I was in a particularly good place in my life . . . and you can hear it. Now I was never the singer's singer. I didn't have the voice that was going to knock 'em dead at the school recital. I got good at using what I have. I

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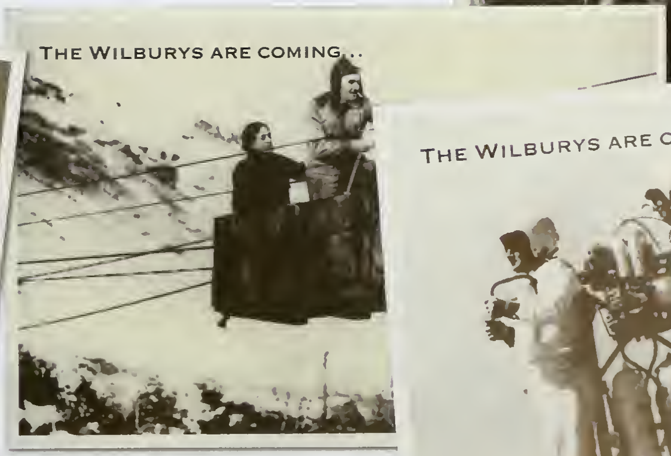
TRAVELING WILBURYS
HANDLE WITH CARE

became a better singer, sure. But I also worked hard to know the possibilities of my voice. You've got to create a sound. It's hard to know what you're going to do with a song until you're in the studio. You need to go up to the microphone, start singing it, and then, slowly, you'll find where it feels right. I don't really know what's going to work that well until I'm up at the mic. My question to myself is, "Can I sing this and make someone believe it? Can I get this over with some credibility?" Now if I'm straining or if it's too much effort to sing it, that's going to show and it won't work. But if I'm straining and it sounds, songwise, like I should be straining, then it will work. It's finding that connection between the voice and the song.

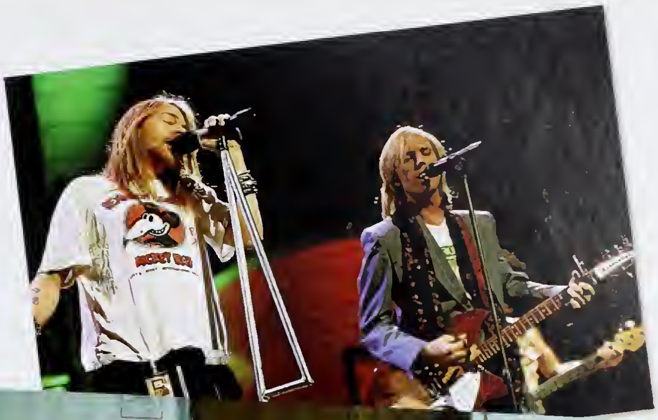
Working with the Wilburys and working with Jeff, I was in such a good place. The songs reflected it. And the way those songs needed me to sing them also reflected the positive place I was in. When you think of who was in the Wilburys, we had an amazing group of distinctive singers, all of whom were masters at delivering the material. For a singer, this was a remarkable group to study. And, I think, in the end, I was more comfortable than I had ever been with my voice.

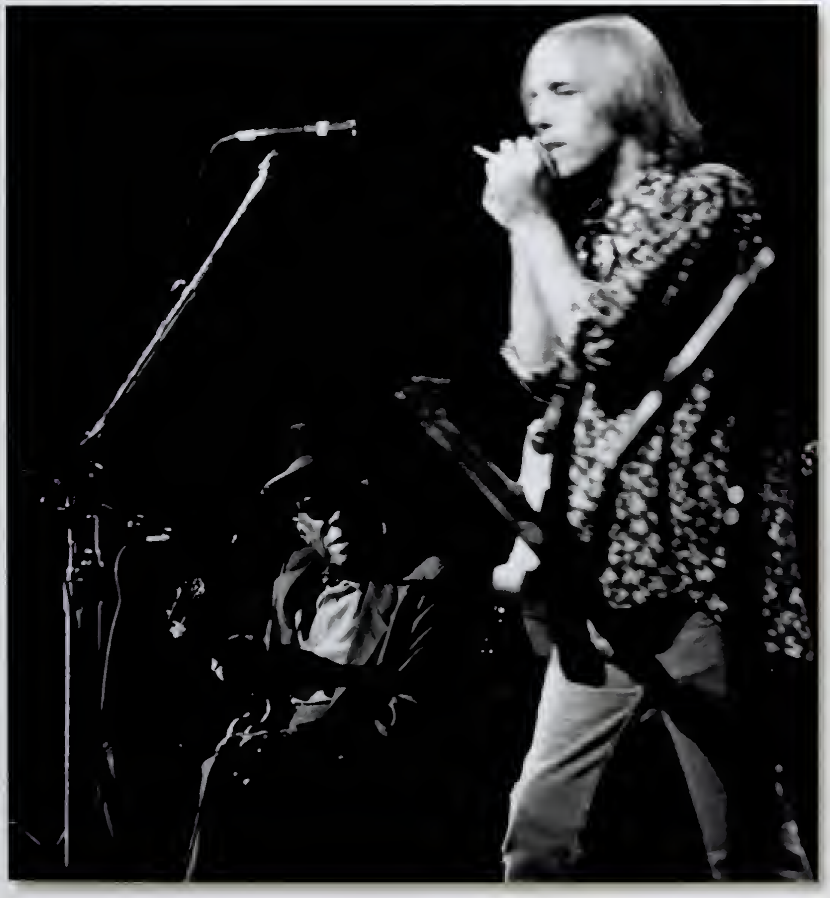
I remember one moment when I had a Heartbreakers session during the same period when we were doing the Wilburys and I was making *Full Moon Fever*. I was trying to fit the Heartbreakers into all of that to prove to them that I could. Which of course I couldn't. So the session is booked. I'm driving to the session. And I have no material. The band is already there. I kind of go, "What am I going to do?" I start beating out a rhythm on the steering wheel and sing, "Well, we're gonna be travelin', travelin', baby." I went through the door, got over to the piano, figured out the changes . . . "Yeah, I got one." And that was that. I wouldn't try to do that every day. Sometimes it's not work at all. Sometimes it's a lot of work. But I love that song. It's on the *Playback* box set. This was the kind of stuff that was more possible in that period, just by virtue of the fact that I was so stimulated by what was around me.

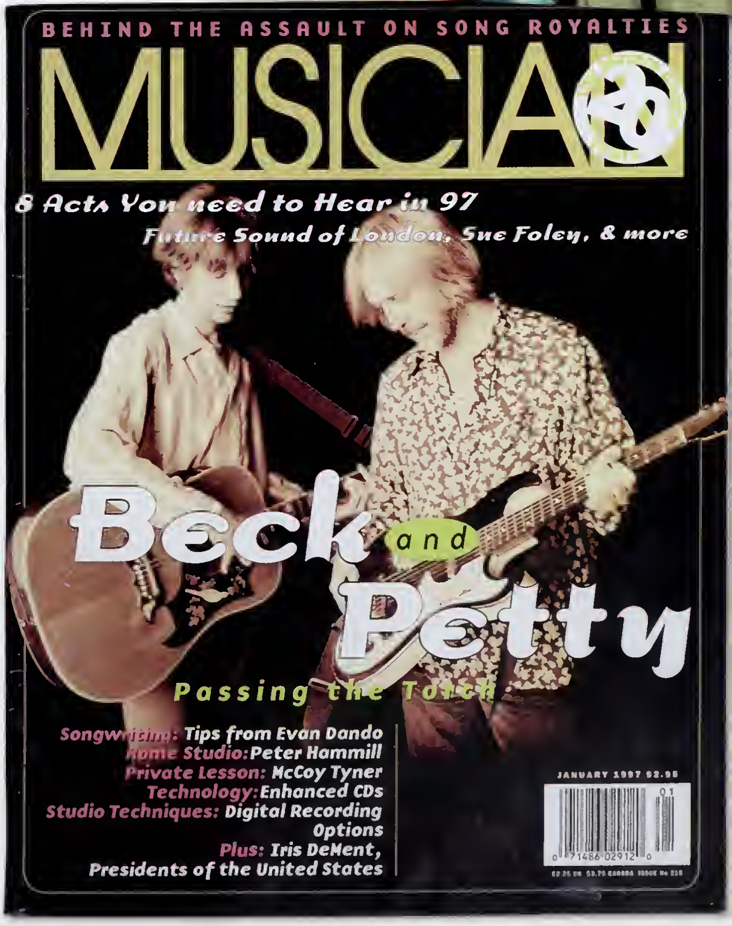
Your artistic peer group can lift you right up sometimes. The Wilburys was that peer group in its best possible version. I've had nice moments throughout my career when an artist I admire weighs in on my material. I remember Bruce Springsteen saying something about the song "Straight Into Darkness," and at a time when I felt like that album, *Long After Dark*, was kind of lost on people. That meant a lot. Bob mentioned that he really liked the song "Something Big" on *Hard Promises*. It just makes me feel great, means so much more than any critic could mean to you because these guys actually do it and know what it's like. The approval of Prince just meant the world to me. I never would have dreamed he would know my music. We hear each other's records. If you got a good one, usually you get a phone call or a note, or when they see you they'll tell you. I remember once when John Mellencamp wrote "Pink Houses," I was so moved by that that I called him and I said, "Now you've really got one, buddy." I think he appreciated that, you know? The approval of your peers means plenty. They're out there doing the same job and struggling with it the same way you do.



“Your artistic peer group can lift you right up sometimes. . . . I’ve had nice moments throughout my career when an artist I admire weighs in on my material. . . . We hear each other’s records. If you got a good one, usually you get a phone call or a note, or when they see you they’ll tell you.”







COUNTERCLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:

The Heartbreakers with Eddie Vedder, Denver, 2006.

Alan Weidel, Benmont, Mike, Jerry Lee Lewis, Tom, J.W. Whitten (Jerry Lee’s road manager) at the Palomino Club, North Hollywood, 1984.

Tom with John Lee Hooker at the Fillmore, San Francisco, 1997.

Tom and Beck gave an interview together for Musician *magazine in 1997.*

Tom with Lou Reed, Bob Dylan, Randy Newman at Farm Aid, 1985.

Performing “Free Fallin’” with Axl Rose at the 1989 MTV Video Music Awards.

Chapter Eight/ Free (Fallin') At Last

It's not going to be a Heartbreakers' project. Jeff's approach was not based on cutting live with a band. He built the track. That isn't how we were used to working. Change is imperative—but it doesn't always go down so easy. That's where the bandleader has to learn to live through the push back, whether it's from the band, the fans, the label, or what have you. At a certain point you're out there and intuition is going to be your only guide.

GOING WHEREVER IT LEADS

Tom Petty: Jeff Lynne became a big part of my musical life.

Jeff Lynne: It was quite a low key for him on that song. I suggested that he just go up a whole octave at a certain point. And it just clicked. The whole song just locked into place.

Tom Petty: I ad-libbed the song for the most part, but Jeff played a key role in the writing. For one thing, the title was his, "Free Fallin'." He volunteered that to me when I was stuck for a title. I don't remember it that well, but I think Jeff had at least some of the tune. I know for certain that he suggested I take it an octave up at the chorus. This made it happen. Suddenly that title was given incredible musical support. So I gave him credit for it, for sure.

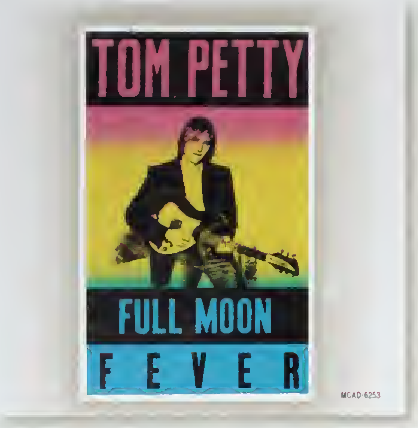
Adria Petty: I remember I had a nanny, like this crazy nanny when I was in high school. We were driving around in my mother's car, and I found a cassette that said "Free Fallin'" on it. I put it in the tape player and it just had that one track, "Free Fallin'." They hadn't really cut it. It was a demo. Me and a friend were in the car. We were like, "Fuck, that's a good song. Play it again." We just played it all week, over time, in carpool when we were going home. I would come in the house and say, "God, that's a good song."

Mike Campbell: Working with Jeff was a real eye-opener because he's a musician as well as a producer. He knows so much about record craft that we'd never done before. For me it was like going to musical college. I soaked up so many ideas and little tricks that Jeff knew about for making records. It was really amazing.

Benmont Tench: It sucked. They put on "Free Fallin'" and Tom started singing. I was like, "Oh, God, how lovely." I tried to get my hands on it, but they wouldn't let me. They wouldn't let me near it. They wouldn't let me near it.

Tom Petty: I'd written a couple songs with Jeff, and now he was going to help me record them. I called Mike Campbell. He had a studio at his house that we've done a lot of work in. In a makeshift fashion, he had crammed this gear into a bedroom. M.C. Studios. The guest bedroom. We wanted to cut right away because Jeff was going to go back to England.

We went over to Mike's. The rest of the Heartbreakers weren't even in town. I rounded up a drummer friend, Phil Jones, someone we've known for



OPPOSITE TOP:

The original cover shot for Songs From The Garage, *later renamed* Full Moon Fever, *1988. Tom is shown in the garage of Mike Campbell's house, the location of M.C. Studios.*

a long time. He played the drums and Mike, Jeff, and I played the rest of the instruments. This was "Yer So Bad." The next day we recorded the second song, which was "Free Fallin'." Two good days of work, I'd say.

Mike Campbell: Jeff had a system of recording one or two instruments at a time and building the track up quickly. Start the record in the afternoon. By that evening it's done.

Tom Petty: The Heartbreakers didn't like the idea of working with Jeff. They didn't want to work that way, maybe that was it. I remember calling Howie, and he came over to Mike's. When I arrived at the session there's Howie sitting outside looking really irritated. I said, "Well, we'll probably be getting to the bass pretty quick." Then he tells me that he didn't really like this song. I said, "Okay, if you don't like the song, you don't need to play on the song." He said, "Right. Bye." It was "Free Fallin'," and I already knew that it was one of the best songs I've come up with. No one was going to shake my sense for what I was hearing in that one. Benmont was still wild as an Indian at that point. Stan was in Florida or something. I don't know what the problem was, but I took it right there that this was going to be a solo album. It's not going to be a Heartbreakers' project. Jeff's approach was not based on cutting live with a band. He built the track. That isn't how we were used to working. Change is imperative—but it doesn't always go down so easy. That's where the bandleader has to learn to live through the push back, whether it's from the band, the fans, the label, or what have you. At a certain point you're out there and intuition is going to be your only guide. A track like "Free Fallin'" made it a hell of a lot easier for me to hold my ground.

We would write one day and record the next, then every few days mix down what we had recorded. Didn't take very long initially. I think we probably did about nine songs in a few weeks, and then Jeff went over to England and Mike and I did a few more tracks. We did "Love Is A Long Road" and "All Right For Now" while Jeff was gone. The record company thought the record was too short. So we cut the Byrds' song "Feel A Whole Lot Better," and then we were done.

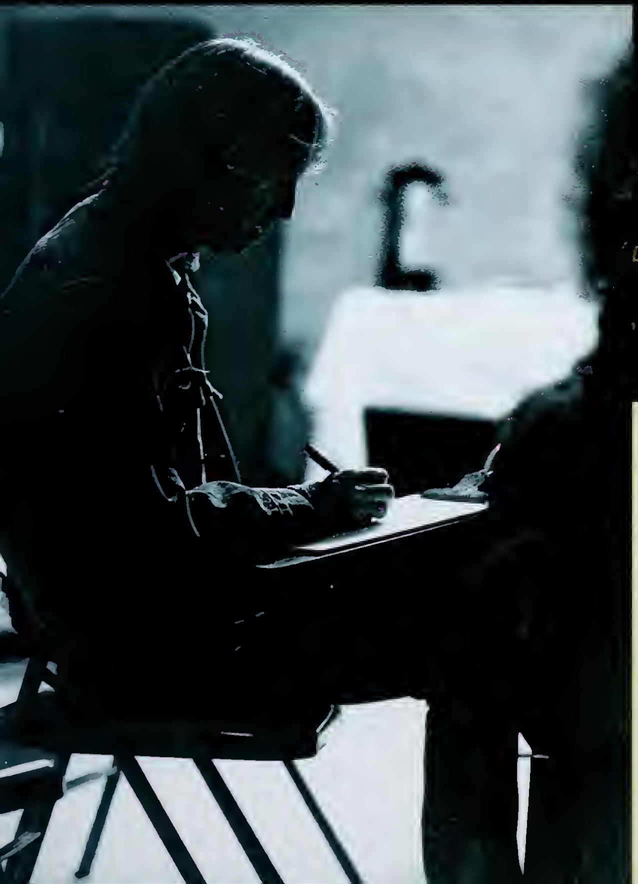
The whole time I was working on the record I heard it bad-mouthed by the Heartbreakers all over the place. I would run into somebody and they would say, "Oh, I was talking to one of the guys and they said you're doing the wrong thing. You're making a crappy record." I'd just say, "Well, I think I'm doing all right." I don't know what it was. Maybe it was plain old jealousy. They could explain it better than I could. But I think it was just jealousy, like they weren't involved and they were mad about it. I told them up front, I'm not leaving the group.

If you take the Heartbreakers' perspective, I've joined the Wilburys and my next release is going to be a solo effort. But I'm telling them I'm coming back. Well, let's be real, I don't blame them for being skeptical about me coming back. To me it was a great time because I was free at last. I was in a whole new era, with people that were gregarious. They were happy, up people, and the Heartbreakers had been in this closed, dark, old-blood environment. We had come a long way together.

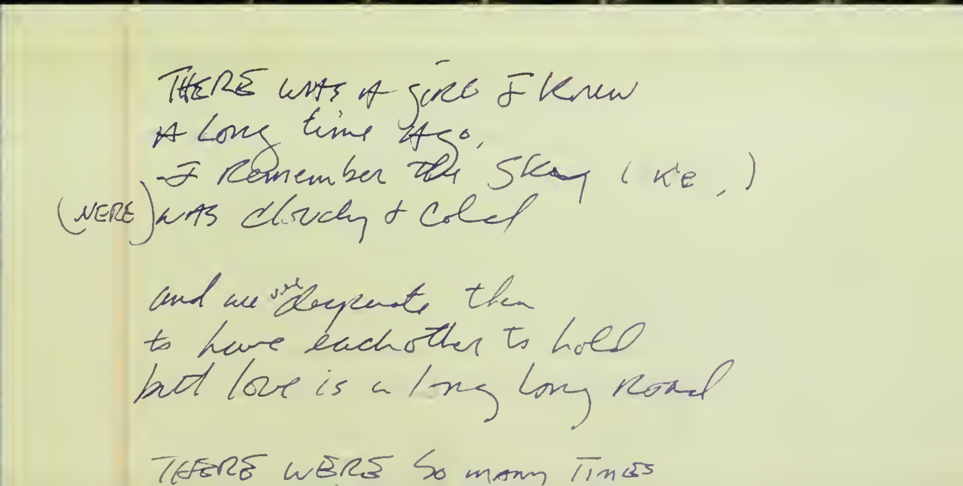
I never thought I was going to leave. I don't think I could have done that and been happy about it. I guess I could have if I had to. I could have just been a Traveling Wilbury. But that was never the idea. All the Wilburys had other projects. Bob Dylan was certainly going to go back to his regular job. And so was I. I never had any thought of leaving the Heartbreakers. I knew they were maybe the best rock-and-roll band there was. You don't walk out on that. They were my friends, and friends were my whole life. So I didn't leave them. Glad I didn't.

Benmont Tench: The Jeff Lynne records sometimes feel to me like a slap in the face. That's not how they're meant, but that's how it can feel.

Tom Petty: There I was, publicly enjoying being free of the Heartbreakers for a while. Publicly enjoying being free of that diplomatic process, just enjoying working with Jeff. Roy Orbison came over and sang. Fate was



BEN
KIT VOX
HOWIE
T.P.
MIKE
KIT
S.R.
S.L.


THERE WAS A GIRL I KNEW
A LONG TIME AGO,
I REMEMBER THE SKY (LIKE,)
(WERE) WAS CLOUDY & COLD
and we desperate then
to have eachother to hold
but love is a long long road
THERE WERE SO MANY TIMES

doing its thing and bringing the Wilburys together. We were becoming friendly with all those people. Pure fun. Then, on the heels of dealing with some Heartbreaker resistance, I bring *Full Moon Fever* to the record company—and they reject it outright. "Nope, we don't hear a single here." There were five hit singles on that record, but they didn't hear anything. "Start over, we're not going to accept this." It broke my heart. I'd never had a record rejected. I would go home and listen to the record, and there was nothing wrong with it.

George, Jeff, and I were at Mo Ostin's one night in our dating phase. We were doing a lot of playing guitars and singing, just casually. And Lenny Waronker was there, also a key man at Warner Brothers. Mo's wife, Evelyn—God bless her, you know—she heard us playing and said something like, "You guys sing so well together, you should have a group." No one knew that we were thinking along the same lines. Then George called out "Free Fallin'," and we played that there in the living room. Lenny looks at me and says, "Listen, that was rejected?" I tell him, yeah. He says, "I'll sign you right now to Warner Bros. I'll be glad to put that out anytime you want."

Denny Cordell: Tom asked if I would listen to something, and I said sure. He put on the album with "Free Fallin'." I jumped up and shouted and laughed. It was just great. And he said, "I'm glad you like it because the record company doesn't want to release it." He told me that they felt it was inconsistent with his image. I fired off a letter to the president saying he should fire his ass.

Tom Petty: In the end I took an old record-business strategy. I decided to bide my time, hope for a regime change at the record company. That happens all the time. Sure enough, one came. I took it to the new guys and they loved it.

The Wilburys came out and had a big hit record. Then we brought out *Full Moon Fever*, and it became the biggest record I had ever made. It was a huge success with five singles all doing well. Suddenly we're into another world. I've found a new area of music—I sort of reinvented what I did at that point. I look back on that period with a lot of fond memories.

IF IT AIN'T BROKE

Tom Petty: As a producer, Jeff has a great way of clearing space for the song, revealing its characters.

Mike Campbell: *Into The Great Wide Open* was a matter of trying to get those two to fit together, the band and Jeff Lynne.

Benmont Tench: Jeff has always been very, very nice to me. But I don't really know him because he is a guy who can play anything and has an idea of what to play. I think that's what he does as a producer. And there's nothing for me to do there. During *Into The Great Wide Open* I got a phone call occasionally.

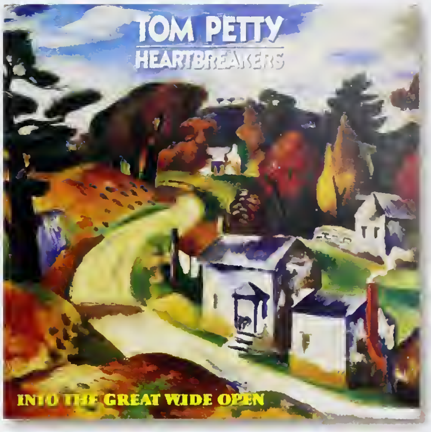
Jeff Lynne: I know Tom and Mike better than the rest of the group.

Tom Petty: *Into The Great Wide Open*—that was the return of the Heartbreakers. I tried to make a record with Jeff Lynne producing the Heartbreakers. A successful experiment, but a tough one. Jeff isn't really known to produce groups. He doesn't really like working with a group, so it requires some patience on his part and some patience on their part. I don't think their idea of how they would like to make a record is necessarily the way Jeff goes about it. But I couldn't help but try it. I was so impressed with Jeff, and we'd had so much fun and made such good music, that I wanted to see what happened if we brought them together for a record. It did work out pretty well to an extent. But I don't think I would try it again. The Heartbreakers' way of doing things is to track everything live, all at once, and live or die by that. Jeff likes to make a rhythm track and then—sort of like a sketch becoming a painting—add colors to it. They're Polaroid. They want everything right there.

One issue the band had with Jeff was that he wasn't interested in hearing them play as a unit or hearing them jam. He knew what he wanted the drums to do. He went in and got that. You know, "Here's what I need you to do." And that's what they did, and then they were done. I think they felt like they weren't being appreciated, but they were. It was just a different way of making records than say Jimmy Iovine or Rick Rubin. Jeff is an arranger. He arranges the record in his head—and he's already thinking like, "Well, what are we going to have the drums do to make this song work?"

Me? I like whatever approach results in a great record. I don't care. I'll swim the English Channel if I have to. Whatever you want me to do. I just want to make the record in the way that I think is best in the moment. As I said, my job has often been to navigate through other people's resistance to change. Dave Stewart comes on the scene. Uh, oh. Jeff Lynne. Uh, oh. In cases like this, the evolution of the band is forced. If we don't evolve, everyone suffers, particularly the ones—ironically enough—who are most opposed to those changes taking place. We've been together thirty years, right? Well, we wouldn't have if I had buckled and kept doing it the way we'd always done it. You have to take some gambles, walk out a little closer to the edge at times, in order to keep the thing fresh, to keep it interesting for everyone.

Into The Great Wide Open was very successful. We had two hit singles. I think it's pretty good. I actually heard it not long ago. I checked into a hotel room and—you know how they leave CDs in the room for you to play—there's Bach, then *Latin Favorites* and *Into The Great Wide Open*. So I put it on and listened to it. I thought it was pretty good.



Howie Epstein: Each guy has his own way of doing things. I would hate to compare one to the other. Iovine had his way, where he wasn't really a musician per se but an overseer. Jeff is definitely a musician.

Dave Stewart: Jeff Lynne has done an incredible job of, you know, when he worked with Tom, of keeping the Tom, the Tomness about it. But there is also this pop sensibility.

Jimmy Iovine: Tom needs a partner in the studio. I feel that. That is not an insult. So did the Beatles, and so did the Stones. Jeff was a brilliant choice. A really brilliant choice. The better Tom's relationship with the producer, the better the record. That's what I think.

RECORD PRODUCTION

Tom Petty: Different producers, just like songwriters, have different ways of working. Jimmy Iovine's approach involved us playing it live, over and over and over until we get it right. Very painful way to go. Very painful way to go and expensive. Probably took us two years to pay for *Damn The Torpedoes*. We spent a lot of money in recording costs. Jeff Lynne's way is much cheaper, and I think just as effective. The point is simply that they are different, that's all. I'm not looking to say one's wrong and one's right, one's superior and the other must be avoided at all costs. The moment I start to think in terms of an orthodoxy to the process, I've failed as a bandleader and, actually, as a producer myself.

I always feel that if we don't shake ourselves up we'll stagnate. It's also the nature of the people in this band that if you challenge them, challenge them by bringing in Jimmy Iovine or Dave Stewart or one of the other producers, they are a little bit suspicious of the neccessary change to our way of working. Once an outsider proves himself to them, once there's a playback that's really great, then the band generally gets on board. Not that they'll all jump on at the same time. It usually takes me and Mike to convince them to go along.

It took them a long time to warm up to Dave Stewart. They're really insecure in some ways, the Heartbreakers are. Very insecure. I don't know why, but they can get really fussy about things. I believe that it's good to put them through new things because it feeds the vitality of the band when we do it. When they pull it off, then everyone understands. It's my job as the record producer—and I am a record producer, not just tagging my name on there but taking the job really seriously—to try to take us all places we haven't gone before, to do something we haven't done. It isn't always easy. Rick Rubin was another one where I don't think all of them completely trusted Rick Rubin when he came in.

It's funny, I'm the guy who talked Mike, Ben, Jim Lenehan, these great friends of mine, out of going to college. Completely convinced them that they were making a mistake, persuaded them to avoid campus at all costs. But you won't find another person who is more of an advocate of education. One of my strengths has been to keep the collective learning process going. This means that different producers come in and out of the band's life. I keep taking my education up a notch. It isn't a matter of diplomas and degrees. It is a way of living, a way of staying open to the lessons that might be out there. You will never be told when the next bit of education is coming or where it's coming from or who the teacher will be. That information will only reveal itself after the fact. All that you can do is leave a little room there for the next lesson to come through. Someone will be carrying it. You just leave the door open a crack. Right?

SCOTT TAKES THE EMPTY SEAT

Tom Petty: The Heartbreakers could get really jumpy on commercial airplanes for some reason. It's always been an ordeal. We had real problems in the old days because there were five of us. Somebody was

ABOVE:

Howie, circa 1986.

RIGHT:

Rolling Stone *cover shoot, August 1991.*

FOLLOWING PAGES:

Mike, Tom, Benmont, Stan, Howie.

SPIN

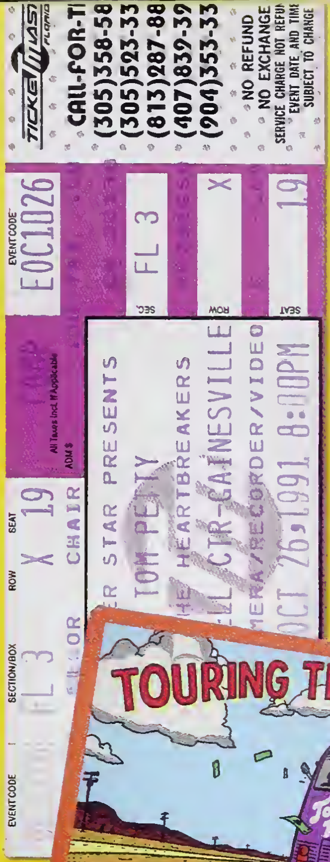
CHINA
Inside the Square with the Student Leaders

TOM PETTY
Won't Back Down

RAP SUMMIT
State of the Hip Hop Nation

INDIGO GIRLS
LOVE AND ROCKETS
SIMPLE MINDS
DINOSAUR JR.
BIKER METAL

AUGUST $2.50
CANADA $3.50
08



With prayer and pop music

Song's lyrics help bring Dayton girl, 17, back from coma

"She's a good girl. Loves her mama. Loves Jesus and America, too . . . I want to write her name in the sky. I wanna free fall out into nothing. Gonna leave this world for a while."

— Pop singer Tom Petty

By CINDY HORSWELL
Houston Chronicle

Laura Hight missed her 17th birthday because she had left this world for a while.

But she battled back from a deep coma, and 4½ months after a car wreck that doctors didn't expect her to survive, the Dayton teenager spoke again.

Her father, C.T. "Rusty" Hight, 47, a lawyer and member of the small Liberty County town's school board, and her mother, Leah, a 39-year-old homemaker, never doubted that she would come back to them.

"When I first saw her at the hospital," Mrs. Hight said, "I told her that I knew she hurt bad, but that she would be fine, that we would be with her. Everybody was praying for her, and God was going to heal her. I never really gave her the choice to die."

A single tear rolled down Laura's swollen, red face as her mother spoke that night.

For weeks afterward, a few tears appeared daily. Each renewed the mother's hope that somewhere inside that battered body was her child, struggling to communicate.

Finally, on June 17, while a tape of the teen's favorite pop tunes played, Laura began to speak the words to one song from memory. The song was *Free Falling*. Perhaps the lyrics held particular meaning for her after all that had happened.

■ ■ ■

Feb 1 was memorable because of a steady snow that fell. Because of the snow, Laura, a junior honor student at Dayton High School, got to skip tennis practice and go home early. She didn't take her normal route because 16-year-old John Gunter asked for a ride to his house.

Her parents had given her the champagne-colored Mazda only five months earlier after she'd earned her driver's license, and — they said — she didn't mind giving her friends a lift, but always insisted that they wear seat belts.

A few miles from the high school, the car's tires began sliding on a snowy curve on FM 1409. It skidded onto the shoulder and she fought to

See COMA on Page 18A.

Progress has come steadily for Laura Hight, shown here with her mother, Leah, since she heard a Tom Petty song and surprised her therapist by singing along. The lyrics were the first words to come from her mouth since a head injury sent her into a deep coma in February

going to have an empty seat next to him. And you never knew who was going to end up sitting in that empty seat, right? We had this thing called the snake bite routine. If it looked like someone was going to take that seat, you would start going, "Snake bite, snake bite, snake bite, snake bite." And they would never sit there. It would be the last place anyone would want to sit. Scott came in somewhere around *Full Moon Fever* as part of the touring band. And we wouldn't let him go.

Scott Thurston: I could have been a roadie, and I would have been happy.

Jackson Browne: I always thought Scott was another unfolding mystery, a guy who's played with the Stooges and Ike and Tina Turner. I mean, those are the poles of rock and roll. In the Heartbreakers, they call him Duckhead. When he's playing with my band he's called Tourette's, because when something is going wrong he starts . . . he just sort of comes apart and starts yelling. Or another nickname for him is Fuck! Fuck!— "FuckFuckFuckFuckFuck."

Tom Petty: Stan suggested Scott. Scott's a good all-around musician. He came down and was just going to do a couple of weeks. He's now been around . . . what is it? Fifteen, twenty years? He can do that high harmony singing. There are also a lot of other parts, particularly around the time of *Full Moon Fever*, that I wanted to reproduce live and couldn't. Guitarwise, we were always frustrated because there was one more part we heard. Scott does a lot of things. He can play acoustic. Or he might play a little extra keyboard part. He's the utility man and more.

Scott Thurston: I come from the same era as Tom and the band. We grew up with rock-and-roll radio and the '60s. I've been playing in bands since I was thirteen.

Tom Petty: Scott was with Iggy and the Stooges, the Ike and Tina band for a while. Impressive stuff. This isn't to mention a few additional assets Scott brings to the band. First, Scott's a good traveler. We've been through some plane rides that really turn everybody a pale white. And there's Scott, waving a drink around, laughing through this incredible turbulence. The band often remarks on Scott's good nature as jets are going through terrible weather. Second, as far as the politics of the band were concerned, when Scott started playing with us, he was neutral. He was new on the scene. He hadn't joined any camp politically. So he had everybody going to him with their troubles, you know? He handled that pretty well, I thought.

Knowing of his neutral politics, one day I even talked Scott into riding on my bus. The rest of the guys were too proud to get off the band bus and come on mine. They weren't going to ride on the, the, uh, star's bus. Because anyone who did that would have been politically persecuted by . . . by Stan probably. But Scott didn't know better. He rode with me for nine or ten months. It was just us on this bus for hours and hours and hours. We never went to sleep, not once. Never touched a bunk. We would pull in after a seven-hour ride and just sit on the bus in the parking lot. We were so in our environment there. Our bus was the Idea bus. Their bus was the No Idea bus. They didn't really have an idea on that bus.

Scott Thurston: It was a good bus.

Tom on his bus, Wildflowers tour, 1995.

Gibson

Chapter Nine/ Growing Wild

We all put our heart and soul into Wildflowers. *Rick Rubin was great, very dedicated, and almost dogmatic about "We're gonna make a great record" and "We're not gonna accept anything less than great." And damned if he didn't do it. He pushed me like I hadn't been pushed in a long time.*

EVERYTHING CHANGED, THEN CHANGED AGAIN

Rick Rubin: I'd been aware of Tom's music my whole life growing up. It has always been there. I must have listened to *Full Moon Fever* a thousand times, just over and over again and didn't stop for a year or two years. That was sort of my album of choice.

Tom Petty: At first we were just aimlessly playing in Mike's studio, we weren't really . . . no one said we were making a record. I think a few of the *Wildflowers* songs had already appeared. Then Rick came to us through Mike Campbell. Mike had met Rick Rubin when Rick was working with Mick Jagger. They came over to Mike's—I think they were trying to get a song for Mick—and Mike really liked Rick, suggested I meet him. Mike thought Rick had a lot on the ball. A meeting was arranged, and we got along very well. We agreed to make a record together, and it turned into a big adventure. I think maybe it's my favorite of my recordings.

Rick Rubin: Having heard *Full Moon Fever* I remember I called the president of MCA at the time and said, "You know if it ever works out that Tom wants to work with somebody else . . ." Then Mo Ostin at Warner Bros. told me he signed Tom Petty. I said, "Oh, great, any chance I could . . . ?" So Mo set up the meeting.

Tom Petty: It was another time of change for us. It was clear that Stan was unhappy. He was unhappy, and I think what finally tore it apart for me was that Stan told Mike something about not liking the material I was writing. He didn't think it was what he wanted to be doing. I figured there's no point in making someone play something they're not into in the first place, and we'd been having our differences—twenty years with somebody, it's tough. We also weren't nuts about what we were hearing back, like it was clear that Stan isn't really there for us. And word drifted back that he was auditioning with other groups. I'd hear about that, and when he was finally confronted on it, he was very vocal about not being happy with what we are doing. So, setting Stan issues to the side, I figured I'd just make a solo record. That's how it began, but, gradually, it really became a Heartbreakers' record. But without Stan.

Enter Steve Ferrone. Now Steve was a whole different style drummer. He had played blues stuff with Eric Clapton, but came from a jazz background. Despite that, he was really keen on the idea of playing some rock and roll, and we beat it into him. A ridiculously talented musician. Mike met Steve when George Harrison had a show in London and they were both on the show, with Mike replacing Eric Clapton. Steve had been in Eric's band for a few years. I auditioned Steve right there in the studio. He walked in and played a song with us, and in one take cut the track. And I said, "Now this is the kind of guy I'm looking for." He's been with us ever since.

Benmont Tench: I think the difference is that Ferrone drives the band and Stan drove along with the band.

Tom Petty: We all put our heart and soul into *Wildflowers*. Rick Rubin was great, very dedicated, and almost dogmatic about "We're gonna make a great record" and "We're not gonna accept anything less than great." And damned if he didn't do it. He pushed me like I hadn't been pushed in a long time.

He would come over and go through what I was writing and say, "Well, this is good, but could you rewrite the chorus?" It was always, could you do this or that—assignments, long and short. Sometimes I did what he asked and sometimes I didn't. Sometimes he was right and sometimes he was wrong. But he stayed on it, really kept his eye on the ball. There was a lot of that "Let's just do one more take," you know? It got us into a real work mode. We normally leave the studio at 10 P.M., but we'd stay until 12 and 1 in the morning, just because Rick was pushing us and pushing us to do more and more and to keep writing.

Every producer works differently. He just stayed on my back about writing. "Write another one, write another one, come on, you can write another one." Maybe not the most pleasant experience. It was a lot of work, but I'm really glad we did it because it's the album that I'm probably most proud of. I mean, there's a few of them that I'm really close to, that I'm really proud of, but I think that *Wildflowers* is a special one. It's certainly the one that hangs over my head. It's the one that I still feel like I'm competing with, to this day.

Rick Rubin: He was on a real roll. For that album I think we ended up recording about thirty songs. And certain songs just raised their hand up.

Tom Petty: "You Don't Know How It Feels." That particular song is a good example of me arranging the whole thing, which doesn't happen all the time. But I did that quite a bit with *Wildflowers*. I had a drum box and put that on first, arranging all of the instruments on top of it. I think I put down a guitar after the drum track was there. I wrote the guitar solo note for note as you hear it on the recording and played the guitar through a Leslie in a way that we copied on the final recording. Rick really liked the spare character of the demo. It really worked for the song. Lots of restraint. Benmont added a key part on the electric piano, but once the track was there it seemed wrong if anybody started playing a lot. The space was crucial. I remember I had to go back and play the bass myself on the track because nobody could really get a hold of what to play, because if you played too much, it really got in the way.

I liked working with Rick because he's a song producer, like Denny Cordell was a song producer. I absorbed that spirit and focus on the material, making sure not to lose myself in the quest for the perfect sounds. Duck Dunn, the Memphis bass player, told me once, "Did you ever hear four guys playing really great and it sounded bad?" That spoke volumes to me because I hadn't. If you're playing a good song well and there's enough space, it's usually going to sound pretty great. Duck's recordings with Booker T. and the MGs are a case study in just that.

OPPOSITE AND BELOW:

The Heartbreakers in the studio recording Wildflowers*, 1994.*

Steve Ferrone: The hardest thing with the Heartbreakers is not playing too much. Typically, it's a great song and all you do is find that pocket.

Tom Petty: The recording of *Wildflowers* went on for two years. It's one of those recordings that was really written just as a collection of tunes. I wasn't making songs along a thematic line. It's not all bright and happy, that much is true. A song like "To Find A Friend" probably reflects troubles I was having at home at the time. "Don't Fade On Me," which is very dark, comes from the same realm of experience. All of the changes going down in my life were probably working in the back of my mind somewhere.

STANLEY

Benmont Tench: I've lived in the same house for twenty-five years. I like continuity. I like seeing my friends. I like going to the same restaurants. I damn sure like playing with the same people I like playing with. And I don't, um, know what the dictionary definition of "band" is, but it has got something to do with that. Stanley being gone was hard to adjust to.

Tom Petty: Stan had said somewhere that he liked the band before we became record makers, when we were just a band. By that he meant that when Mike and I got interested in production and crafting a record, rather than simply using microphones to capture what we did on stage, he lost his interest in the Heartbreakers. I know he had a really tough time with Jimmy Iovine and others. The studio's tough on a drummer, and we were pretty young when we were making those first records. It was a lot of pressure on him.

I also think it's important to recognize that for all of the criticism he took, I can't picture anybody else playing on those records. It took a lot of work to make the recordings, but when we got it done, they were pretty incredible. Jim Keltner could play "Refugee," but he wouldn't play it that way. When I hear those records now, I hear a really great drummer.

When it was time to release *Greatest Hits*, which I was really opposed to doing, I got the Heartbreakers together, including Stan and Howie, and we recorded "Mary Jane's Last Dance." It was the last thing that we all played on. And the song became a huge hit, much to my surprise. One of the biggest we ever had. It was a nice result to having us all together in the studio one last time.

But, really, Stan had done everything he could do to be fired. Just everything he could do to push us as far as we could be pushed, and I didn't want to play with him after that. That was at the beginning of *Wildflowers*, just before that record started. I loved him, and he made a huge contribution to what we did, to our history and everything—but then I'd hear that he was auditioning with another group, looking for another job or something along those lines. And then I heard him, at a gig, talking to another guy in another band, and he described us as not his main gig. And I thought, "Okay, well, you're being paid like it's your main gig." Then I realized he's hanging out to get the dough, because it's a well-paid job being a Heartbreaker. I had the feeling that was the only reason he hadn't walked off yet. So push came to shove and that was the end of it. We didn't speak again for ten years, until the Hall of Fame induction. We got together and played at that and talked and were friendly, but I haven't seen him again since then.

Tony Dimitriades: The vibe was so bad by the end. Stan's last show at the Bridge Concert was sign enough. I remember, Tom said, "Look, I can't, I can't do this. Just call Stan up. He knows it's coming. Call him up and tell him he's out of the band. We got to get someone else." I called Stan, and the first thing that came out of his mouth was, "Greek"—because he always called me Greek—"Am I fired?" I said, "You are, Stan."

I really prefer recording in homes or places that aren't formal studios. Being in a home lends something to the process. I don't know exactly what it is, but when you're in a house you can record in every room. We'll drag wires out to the garage or wherever we need to if we think we've got a particularly good sound in a certain room. People don't listen to music in perfectly tuned control rooms—they listen in living rooms and cars and, you know, in houses.

We have always been like that, where we'll just set up anywhere to make records. Michael was the first one that started the home recording thing in the band. He was always recording at home, and in any nook or cranny he could get something going. I wouldn't be surprised if he's doing it right now. He does it every day. He's gotten more sophisticated with what he can do in a home studio. But over the years we've all made our houses comfortable to record in. It's kind of a prerequisite for the houses we live in.

SHOPPING THE KIT

Dave Grohl: It was October of 1994 and Nirvana had ended. I wasn't really sure what I was going to do with my life. The whole Nirvana thing had become such a big deal, and then Kurt [Cobain] died and everything just stopped. For the longest time it was difficult to listen to music because it would remind me of Kurt or Nirvana. Finally I started getting back into playing a little bit, just by myself. I couldn't imagine joining another band as a drummer. I had all of these songs that I had written over the course of six or seven years. I thought, "I want to go to a real studio and record this stuff by myself." I didn't have a label deal or anything. I was doing it for myself.

By the second day I recorded six or seven songs. I thought, "This is kind of cool. Maybe I will try to start a band and play guitar and sing. Maybe that's what I will do because I've never done that before." It was like a clean slate. The second day I was in the studio, someone from my management calls and tells me Tom Petty just called and wants to know if I will play drums with him on *Saturday Night Live*. I'm like, "What the fuck is he calling me for?! He couldn't find a better drummer?" It was so out of left field. I was a huge Tom Petty fan my whole life. I said, "Tell me when, where I got to be, what do I got to do." It was the first time that I really looked forward to playing the drums since Nirvana had ended.

Tom Petty: After *SNL*, I discussed the possibility of Dave staying on, but he decided to start the Foo Fighters. Our search, not a very long one, really, continued.

Steve Ferrone: I am talking to my girlfriend at the time and she said, "Well, what are you going to do next?" I was like, "I don't know. Something will show up." She said, "Well, what would you like to do?" I said, "I would like to go on the road with Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers." Because I had such a great time doing *Wildflowers* with them. It was totally about the music. But I said, "You know, that's Stan's gig. I don't see how that's going to happen." I should have played the lottery that day. Later the phone rings. My girlfriend tells me, "Tom just called here, and he wants you to call him." So I called Tom. He said, "What are you doing next year?"

Tom Petty: The *Wildflowers* tour was a great one. It was hell on me, because my home life was falling apart and this meant suffering through that long distance as I traveled around. But that tour went for nine months, almost ten. We had a few breaks here and there, but it was almost ten months of just work, work, work. The shows were fantastic. It was great and I remember it really fondly. Having Ferrone along, Scott Thurston still with us. It felt like a great group supporting a great record.

Steve Ferrone: I found the Heartbreakers a little bit strange because they don't really hang out like normal bands. Most bands go out to clubs and hang out. The Heartbreakers go shopping for old instruments. That's their excitement.

I remember we were in upstate New York somewhere. We all walked into this music store and the salesman came over and tried to interest Mike in these brand-new guitars. Mike was trying his best to be polite. Then he started to show Ben synthesizers. So I went up to this guy and I said, "Have you got a room where you keep the stuff you think you won't be able to sell to anybody?" The guy looks at me and says, "We have a room like that." He took us up in the back of the store, opened this door, and all this dust came out. A lot of stuff was bought that day. That's their thing. More of a thrill than going to a bar and picking up chicks.

CONTRACTUAL OBLIGATIONS

Tom Petty: I was so against the *Greatest Hits*. It wasn't my kind of thing. It was a contractual obligation. I hated the idea of it. The songs were meant to be part of the albums they were on. Albums have a particular

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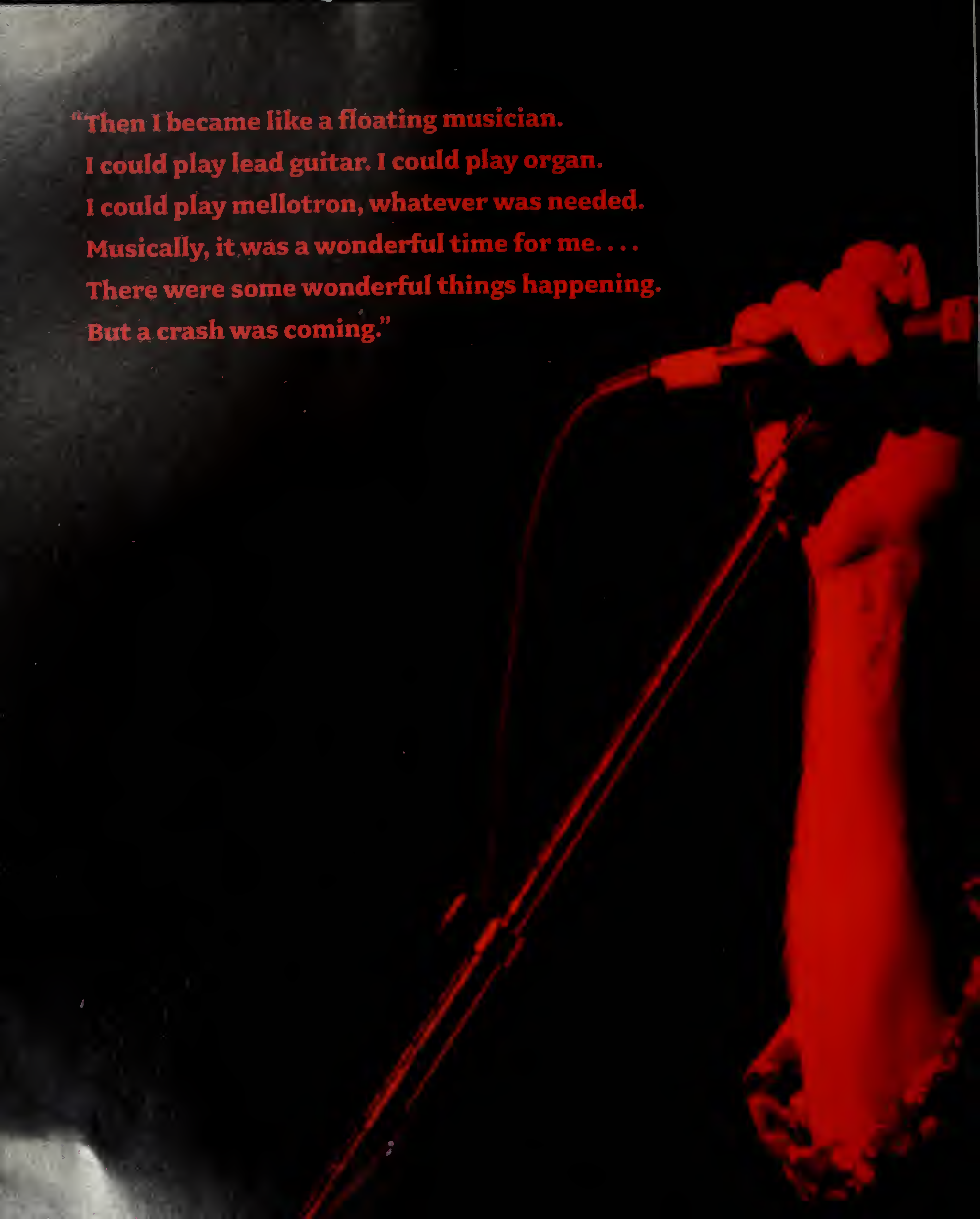

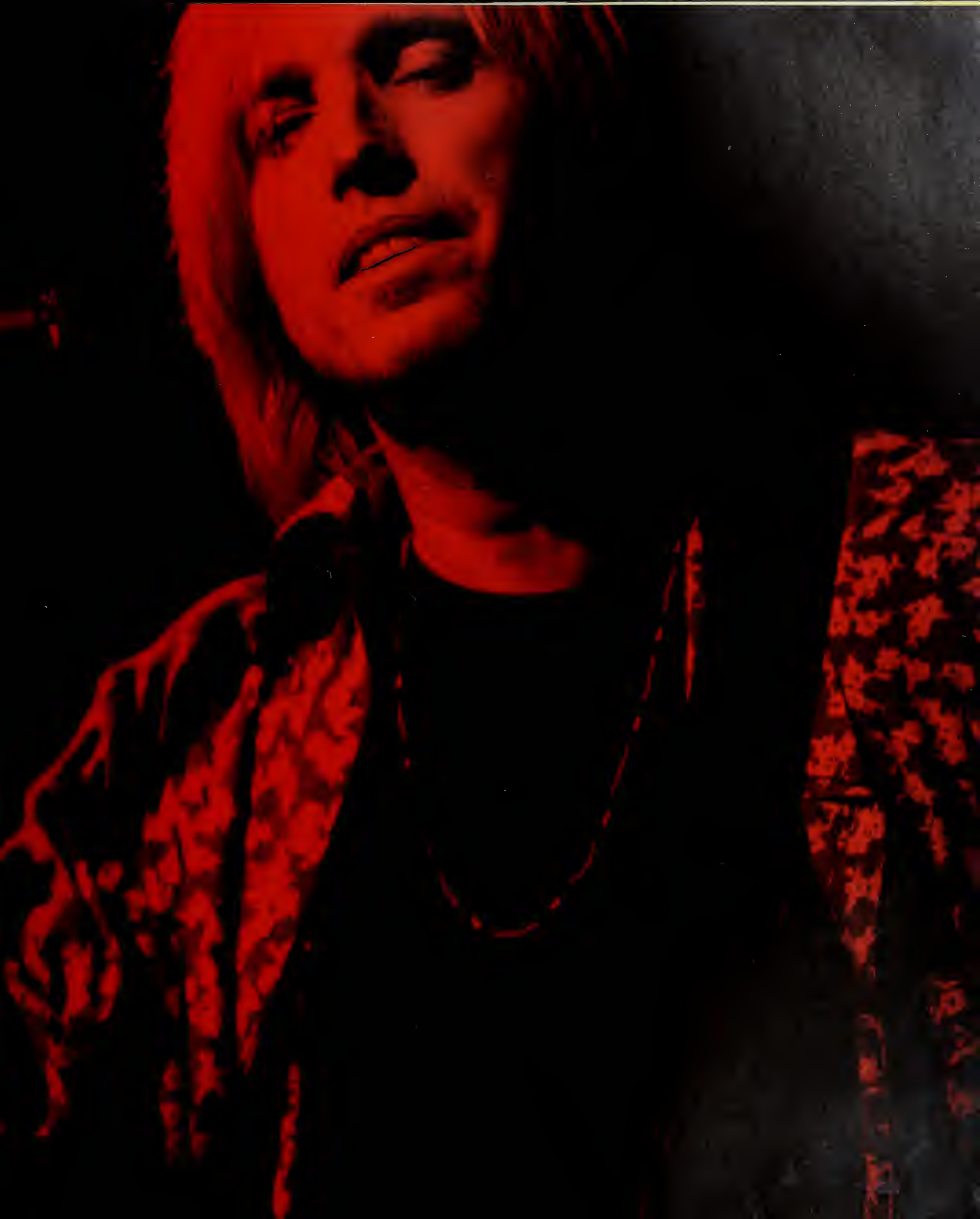

identity, based on the fact that a group of songs, recorded around the same time, is put together in a very specific order. I also didn't see us writing another song for it. I was so offended. I was like, help me to understand this—it's not a hit, how can it be on the *Greatest Hits*? It was just a marketing tool that they use now to sell the record. It's another way of selling product for a second time. You put something new on it. But I was obligated under contract to do it. I was making *Wildflowers* at the time, but the contract called for the Heartbreakers to do this. That was how we happened to get everyone together one more time. We stopped working on *Wildflowers*, worked up another song, actually a song that I started during *Full Moon Fever* and hadn't finished, and it became "Mary Jane's Last Dance."

The album went on to sell over 10 million records. Went on to be the biggest album we'd ever had and one of the very few—I was told this the other day—one of the very few live or greatest hits collections that has sold those kind of numbers. So, go figure. It's a damn good record by virtue of the fact that it has those really good singles, ones that we really worked on. It's not necessarily our best work, just the most popular work.

Playback was another contractual obligation that grew into a really happy project. I brought George Drakoulias in to go through these rooms full of tapes that had been accumulating over the years. George came up with all kinds of recordings that we hadn't released for one reason or another. That turned out to be a full two CDs in the *Playback* box set. That came out and was actually very successful. We got a platinum record for a box set, which is pretty unusual. George did an amazing job. I mean, I wouldn't have sat there all the time it took to go through all that. I just kept checking in with him, and he'd say, "Look, look what I found this morning." He'd play me something that was always fun to hear. He did all the work.

It impressed on me how much time we had spent in the studio. We really stayed in the studio almost every hour we weren't on the road. We recorded a lot of music and wrote a lot of music, much more than was called for on the regular releases. I'm not talking about tracks that were just jams or anything but fully finished records that are really good. One day I'm gonna put them out.

STANDING BEHIND THE MAN IN BLACK

Tom Petty: By the time I'd been through the fire, I was a downright sober person. I was focused on making the most of life, enjoying myself and really wanted to be happy. That lasted for a while, and then things got tough again. When your personal life gets hard, sometimes you can hang around forever trying to convince yourself that that's not what's happening. But it was, and it was probably as much my fault as anyone else's. There was no escaping it. What do you do? The sun came out and then it went behind a cloud again. That's the story of my life in a way.

I remember *Wildflowers* being something I was very proud of when it was done, really pleased with every aspect of it. When it was received with such warmth, that was an incredible high for all of us. There was some fantastic feedback, which you don't always get. That was affirming. It was a very nice feeling, particularly as my life was becoming so chaotic at the same time. I'd been on a roll for so long—*Full Moon Fever*, joining the Wilburys, *Into The Great Wide Open*, *Wildflowers*, *Greatest Hits*, *Playback*. It was quite a run. But tucked in there also were the *She's The One* soundtrack and some work we did with Johnny Cash. The soundtrack was a good learning experience and a low-key situation. The Cash album was a much bigger deal to me.

I had known Johnny Cash since probably about 1982 or '83. We had met up, through a mutual friend, and kept in touch on and off. John came to a show now and then. Then Rick started talking to me about signing Johnny Cash to his record label, to American Records. He asked me one afternoon, "Well, do you think I should sign Johnny Cash?" Definitely sign Johnny Cash was what I told him. Prior to Rick coming along Johnny hadn't been treated the way he deserved by whatever record company he was with at the time. They weren't using his talent. They were just giving him drivel to record. He was getting the Nashville treatment, which, you know, isn't what Cash was about.

I went out to dinner with Rick and John and discussed the whole idea of signing up with Rick. The first thing they wanted to do, which was a really good idea that Rick had, was to make a solo acoustic record with just John's guitar and voice. That went really well. It brought him a lot of critical raves and got him a lot of attention from a younger audience. His next step was he wanted to make a record with a band. They phoned me one afternoon and asked if I would play bass. I'm sure they knew that I was going through a tough time at home. I was just weeks away from moving out. They said, "Why don't you come and play bass on this record?" I went down to play the bass, and without even knowing it, I went to the session Mike and Benmont were on.

It hadn't even dawned on me to ask who else was playing. I can't remember, but maybe Ferrone was playing the drums. It was great, you know. They had brought Marty Stuart, a really great guitar player from Nashville, who we all knew. We were making a record with Johnny Cash and felt great. Then John said, "Well, if we're doing this, I gotta have Howie here because it just doesn't seem right." So, Howie came down. Then I became like a floating musician. I could play lead guitar. I could play organ. I could play mellotron, whatever was needed. Musically, it was a wonderful time for me. Then on the weekends or whatever time I could grab, I'd run over and do *She's The One*, try to come up with a score for this movie. It was bits of score and bits of outtake songs. Though I did write a really nice song, "Angel Dream," that I wrote for Dana. I just met Dana around that point and that song remains a favorite. There were some wonderful things happening. But a crash was coming.

TOP AND LEFT:

Tom with Johnny Cash and Rick Rubin, 1994.

ABOVE:

Johnny Cash, Tom, Carl Perkins, 1994.

It was really amazing to hear Johnny Cash do "Southern Accents." It was kind of like the song was written for him. I had the same feeling, maybe even to a greater degree, when I heard him do "I Won't Back Down." I just thought, "Well, nobody will need to hear me do it anymore." He gives it such a credibility. But that happened every time he sang. Whatever he sang, it just resonated.

It's hard to say exactly what accounts for Johnny's power as a singer. There was such an authenticity to his voice that when he sang, even if it was another writer's material, you thought, "This is obviously emanating from some source, some human truth." He had such an authority with the material that we all just watched in awe. And he did it fairly effortlessly, not a lot of takes involved. Immediately, he made songs his own.

You can't learn to do what a guy like Johnny Cash could do. You can't get that connection between the soul and the voice from a teacher. You can have all the lessons in the world, but that's not going to get you near that ability. And Johnny definitely had that connection, like a lot of the best ones do. His vocal performances are prime examples of a man's soul making a connection with his vocal cords. It really puts Johnny in a unique class that includes people like Hank Williams, Jimmie Rodgers, Lefty Frizzell, guys who really delivered their material.

When you hear Johnny Cash sing you hear the man himself. He was a very interesting fellow. He knew hundreds of songs, all these folk songs and country songs. He was very well-read, traveled extensively, had a really colorful life. And somehow it all came out in his voice. He was one of those people who was really a joy to talk to. When we were recording Unchained*, I used to look forward to lunch with him everyday. We'd all sit with him and with June [Carter Cash] and hear these great stories. That album, I think, was one of the best times I ever had recording.*

You could say he had a paternal style. He was older than us and kind of an elder statesman. But age didn't really matter. He was a traveling musician, which supersedes age and category. You could tell this guy has been on the road a lot—and we'd been on the road a lot—and, cosmically, that's where we met. I have a card he sent me once on my birthday that says "You're a good man to ride the river with." That pretty much says it all. Because of that connection we felt, we wanted do right by him, and it resulted in some of our best playing. There's a song on Unchained *called "The One Rose." It's not a Heartbreakers' song, but I hear us just playing it so well. We wanted to please him, show him how much we loved him.*

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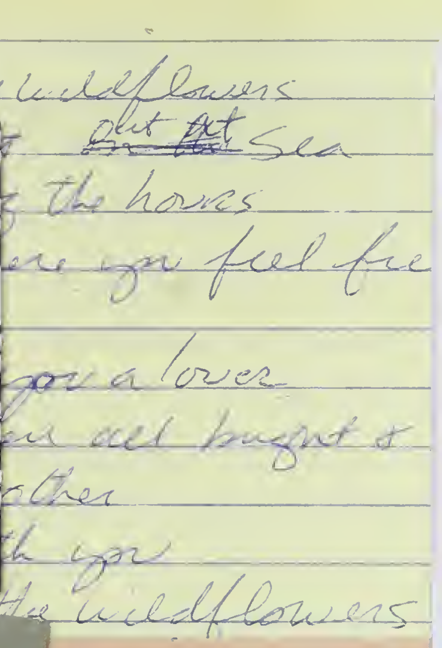
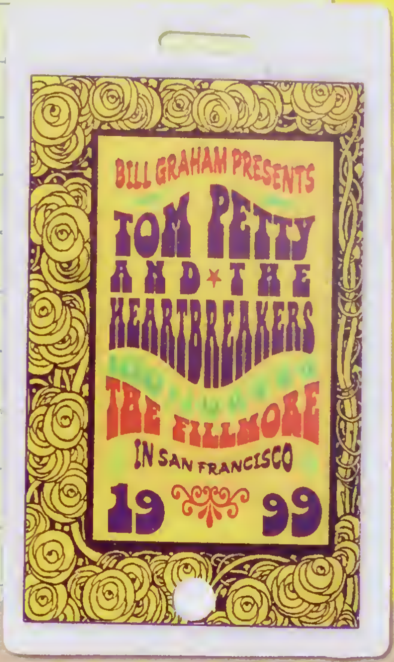
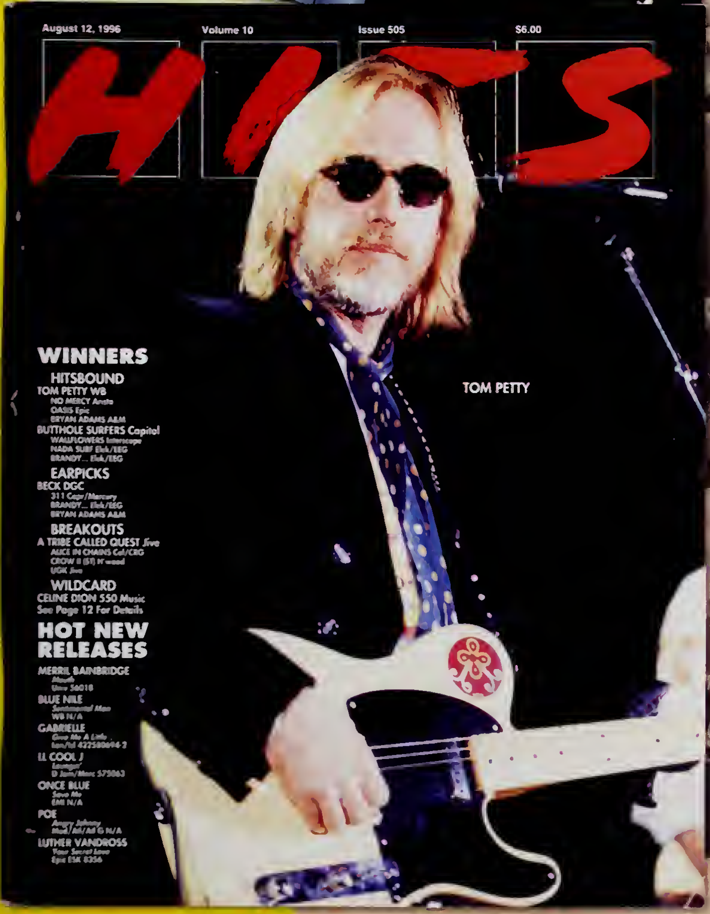
RollingStone
Tom Petty
KING OF THE ROAD
THE SAMURAI AND THE CYBER-THIEF
The Hunt for the World's Most-Wanted Hacker
Moby
THE GREAT WHITE WAIL
ELASTICA • PJ HARVEY
DYLAN UNPLUGGED





n Petty "wildflowers"



Pearl

Chapter Ten/ Turning Thirty

My friends tell me now, and some told me then, that they were concerned. They were worried about me, and I don't blame them. I wasn't communicating with anyone. Really, I just fell down. It was the only time I remember in my life when I just fell down. The load was too much. I was always the one, no matter what happened, who would soldier on. But not this time.

MY ECHO AND ME

Bill Flanagan: I always felt like *Echo* was maybe the one time in thirty years where in some way Tom's nerve failed him a little bit. It's the big divorce album. It's the *Blood On The Tracks*. But it wants to hide that. He was going through something painful in his life. But he didn't come right out and say it.

Tom Petty: I wasn't in good shape. I just wasn't. I was in deep shit. I had cut myself off from most of the world and become something of a hermit. I was staying at this kind of chicken farm place—literally had chickens in the yard—and was living in a cabin there. I was remote from most of my friends and didn't really talk to anybody. It's not a time I remember fondly.

What was it? It's hard to put a finger on it. It was this incredible disillusionment. It was just a lot of pain. My personal life had blown up. A hand grenade into the hut. It just exploded. But I still had my children to think of. I had to get them situated. I still had one daughter in high school. And it was really left in my hands. I didn't have anybody to help me with it. For a long time I went into what they call clinical depression. I would lie in bed every day, wouldn't get up. And I mean for months. I'd just lie there.

Here I was, I got everything I wanted and it fell apart. My career was always fine, but it was quite a blow to realize that my personal life has gone to hell. I sometimes think that if I had been around more, paying attention to it, I would have understood and been able to respond. But I was running away from it. I'd go on the road for nine months on a regular basis. When I had to face it, and when it did explode, I think it overtook me without me really understanding what was happening. I just got so depressed, like really, really depressed. Not depressed in the sense of unhappy. It's a different thing altogether.

I came out of it at the other end okay, but I think a lot of people were worried. My friends tell me now, and some told me then, that they were concerned. They were worried about me, and I don't blame them. I wasn't communicating with anyone. Really, I just fell down. It was the only time I remember in my life when I just fell down. The load was too much. I was always the one, no matter what happened, who would soldier on. But not this time.

Jim Lenehan: Everything, every big thing that happened to the band was coming for a long time.

Adria Petty: I think he was always a great leader, in all areas of his life. But I think having love fall apart for him was horrible. That was the thing he didn't want to happen. He really wanted the marriage with my mother to work. It was really hard for him. He felt, I think, like he let us down. But he had to go.

PREVIOUS PAGES:

The Heartbreakers rehearsing for the Wildflowers tour, 1995.

Tom Petty: When we made *Echo*, I knew I wasn't doing my job in the studio to the fullest. It's amazing the record came out as good as it did, because it wasn't a situation where I was able to stand at the helm. I wasn't writing a lot in that period. I wrote the songs for the album. But I feel that it wasn't the best stuff I ever did. It's okay. But, then again, it's very hard to judge any project created in a time of turbulence. When I listen back to something, I'm not just hearing the tracks—I'm feeling the moment in which the recording was made. And this was the lowest point in my life. I can't approach listening to *Echo* with anything close to objectivity.

Having said that, however, I heard it recently, and even with all of the associations going off in my mind and heart, it sounded a lot better than I was expecting. But I had great people beside me. I was throwing a lot of work off on Mike Campbell and Rick Rubin. Campbell stepped in, thank God. He stepped in and brought the album home pretty much on his own. I was there, but I don't think I was much help. It was all I could have done to have written the songs. I wasn't much help in recording them. It's a period that really shocks me—like anytime someone mentions that album, I just go, "Oh dear." It was tough. It was a hard, hard time.

In the midst of all this Howie was disintegrating in front of my eyes. We all watched Howie spiraling down, down, down. He couldn't get out of his addiction. He kept saying he was ready to quit drugs. But it really had him.

Benmont Tench: One of the things being lost was right in front of us.

Mike Campbell: *Echo* was very difficult emotionally. There were some dark medical and emotional problems going on with different members of the band. Tom had just been through a divorce and was coming out of that cloud. And Howie was kind of falling into his cloud.

Rick Rubin: I remember it being not that fun of an experience. But that song "Room At The Top," I really like that. I like how it goes from quiet to loud. It's got great dynamics and it's really cool.

Tom Petty: The big mistake we made on that album was starting it with the most depressing song I've ever written, "Room At The Top." Downright depressing. Why it starts the album, I can't for the life of me understand. But I wasn't there that much to make decisions. I was there but not there mentally. I was trying to sort out all my problems. There was just too much going on with me. Overwhelming.

There were some nice things about that period. Dana. I was dating her, and I'd see her every few weeks and it'd be nice. She was helping me. There was that bit of light there that kept the picture from going black.

Stevie Nicks: I totally love Dana.

Adria Petty: Now? I think he's probably the happiest I've ever seen him.

Bruce Petty: Dana, she just seems to brighten up his day. You can tell that she means that much to him.

HOWIE

Tom Petty: In 2002 we were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Howie and Ron were both inducted. We figured Ron was going to play on one song and then Howie was going to play on another. It was "Mary Jane's Last Dance" with Howie and "American Girl" with Ron. And Stan was going to play on them both. So there were two rehearsals on two different days. One rehearsal, the first rehearsal, was with Ron. And it went really well. We were all really happy and glad to see each other. We wound up jamming for hours. We were only rehearsing one song—but we were there for hours playing. A great time. The next day Howie is going to play. We're waiting on him. Waiting on him for hours. He finally comes in. I remember that Stan, who hadn't seen Howie in a long time, was really shocked. Then we went to play, and the difference between playing with Ron and playing with Howie was stunning. Howie just wasn't completely there and couldn't give it much. That's when my mind was made up. That rehearsal ended in about twenty minutes. Everyone was out the door twenty minutes after we had started playing. And everyone was pretty much thinking the same thing. The dope was killing Howie.

Tony Dimitriades: The very last time I spoke with Howie about cleaning up was at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. I grabbed him, found a place, and we sat down and talked about it. By then he was saying, "Yeah, I know. As soon as this is over." Tom had tried everything, from compassion to tough love. When Howie was many hours late for the *Echo* photo session, Tom said, "Let's go. Let's just do the album cover shoot without him." And they did, and they made it the album cover. Have a look.

Tom Petty: I think we all felt that our performance that night was a little off. We hadn't played together much and, frankly, it's not the best audience—a bunch of old musicians staring at you. We did okay. I was just glad that we got through it. You know, I wasn't really thinking about the performance too much.

We were up in a suite at the Waldorf after the induction. Stevie Nicks was with us. She had come to cheer us on. And Stevie said, "Where is Howie? I want to see Howie." Howie didn't usually come around after gigs. You know, he vanished. But she insisted that we call him. So Dana, my wife, got on the phone and told Howie we really wanted him to come up. And he did, and he was in a really good mood. He sat with us for a while but didn't say much. But then, when he got up to go, he stood in the door and waved good-bye. And I knew, somehow, that I was never going to see him again.

Steve Ferrone: I never went to Howie's room until the very last tour. He called me up and asked me to go to his room. I went up there and he had the silver foil. He talked to me about it. I was saying, "Man, you got to do something about this. You've got to stop." He said, "Yeah, after the tour I will do something about it."

Benmont Tench: Boy, could he sing—the loss is staggering to me just on an artistic level. There's no way to come to terms with it. He was a brother.

Tom Petty: I can't describe the loss. We were really good friends for twenty years. What do you say? He's gone.

Echo *was a dark album. It needed a dark cover. And it got one. I think it's a good cover, certainly lines up with what's inside.* Echo *isn't a Heartbreakers record that I reach for, maybe because recordings tend to bring you back to where you were when you made them.*

Howie didn't even make it for this cover shoot. He had moved out to Santa Fe, New Mexico, and just kept missing plane after plane to come in for the photo session. All morning long we kept hearing he was on the next plane. He just missed one after another. We were there with the photographer and the whole scene was ready. After a long wait I just got fed up and said, 'Well, why don't we just shoot it without him? Maybe that will send some kind of message." And we did. We just went and shot it without him. I think he showed up at about eight o'clock that night, and it was too late.

DREAMVILLE

Jackson Browne: "Dreamville." Amazing song. I mean, you see this little, blue-lipped Tom as a kid with his mom at the public pool, you know? You see these images that are so universal and so human.

OPPOSITE:
Howie Epstein, 1955–2003.

Jim Ladd: I love "Dreamville" because it's a wonderful look at a simpler, more loving time—where he's going to go down to a guitar store and buy a black diamond string. Wow. That's a great song.

Adria Petty: "Dreamville" so perfectly captures the feeling of the '50s in Gainesville for those guys—when they grew up and when the music was so great, and they were in this small town in America.

Tom Petty: When I came out of that depression, I felt like I had a whole new lease on life. I don't think I did any music for a while. I just was so happy to be back to normal. Eventually I started doing tours without records. We'd just go out and have a lot of fun. That was another rebirth in a way. I really enjoyed it and felt I was back to my old self. After that I settled in to write *The Last DJ*.

Elliot Roberts: I thought it was a brilliant, brilliant album.

Jim Lenehan: *The Last DJ*. Hard to beat.

Tom Petty: That was my only concept album with a very strict theme. I had become aghast at society, at how everything seemed to revolve around money. Money had become king and it was affecting everything. I used the record business as a symbol for changes that were taking place everywhere. Writers often begin with what they know. I know the record business, and there it was in its last dying breaths. But what I saw there was happening all over the place. I was shocked at how mean things were getting. It seemed like the meaner things got, the more they were applauded.

Once I started working, it came very quickly. There was no difficulty in finding things to write about. It was a weird time. I mean, kids were killing each other in school and rock stars were being invented on game shows. Everything that I'd believed in was being made into a joke. There was not a lot of integrity in what was going down in the music business. Here I was, kind of coming back to it, and it struck me as being just so sad. That's what inspired me to write the record. Now I realize that it was almost a bigger subject than you can tackle. But I couldn't watch the world changing to that degree and not comment on it, you know? It's my job to comment on this stuff and to take note of what's going on. I'm surprised that not many people say much about it. I thought it was worth writing about.

Jim Ladd: The first thing people do in war is take over the media. First thing. When big business came in and Ronald Reagan came in and took over, they deregulated the industry. That allowed Clear Channel and Infinity to buy up all of these radio stations. We used to have a rule called the "seven and seven" rule. You could only own seven radio and seven TV stations max. That ensured mom-and-pop competition. Deregulation changed that. At last count Clear Channel had twelve hundred stations. That's a lot of control over information. For example, Clear Channel put out a list after 9/11 of songs that you couldn't play, including "Imagine" by John Lennon. Put out a list. Don't play these songs.

Tom Petty: I tried to say something about corporate America and what it has done to the small businessmen or the independent businessmen, but also how we all kind of wind up serving these corporations that have become even bigger than the political process. The corporations are driving the political process. It just seemed like something that was old and beautiful was gone in the morning. I thought it was worth writing about. I thought it was worth talking about. My position wasn't that everyone was ignorant about this but that artists could start looking into the effects of it.

It was not received well by many friends. People thought I was arrogant or taking a cheap shot. I saw a lot of curious things written about *The Last DJ*, but in the end, I think the music really does hold up and that the

album is something to be proud of. Radio had given me this great wonderful life and rich tapestry of music over the years, and now it had become this other thing, programmed in relation to market research. I was seeing advertisements for stations that said, "No talk." No radio personality whatsoever, no one there to introduce you to something that might possibly mean the world to you, like music meant the world to me. I thought that was sad that it had to go that way. The first single from the record, "The Last DJ," was banned by a number of stations immediately when it was released. It was banned from airplay for being anti-radio.

I knew I wasn't making the most popular move. But I had to get it out of my system. It was not a good-time record. It wasn't what anyone wanted from me. But that can't be your barometer all the time. That's a dangerous way of thinking. Rick Rubin thought I was doing the wrong thing. When I played it to the record company, you could have heard a pin drop. It finished and no one said anything. Then they said, "Well, that's not about us, is it?" And I said, "Well, I don't know." I can really understand why Warner Bros. didn't get behind it in the way they should have, though saying it wasn't a good album was bullshit. It's good music.

Bill Flanagan: If you put out a record, a theme record, which basically says the record industry stinks, radio has sold out, this whole business is so corrupt it's stinking like a dead dog on a hot day—you know you're probably not going to get a lot of support from radio. But I think it's one of the most interesting records anybody has made in the last ten years.

Tom Petty: The critics were pretty rough. You never like it when critics are rough on you. It's your baby they're beating, right? Of course I would have preferred they all loved it. Some did. But here's the thing that meant the most to me: there was not a single critic who ever suggested that what I described was inaccurate, no one wrote, "Look, this isn't the way it is." I never saw that.

THE OBVIOUS CHOICES ARE OFTEN THE BEST

Jim Lenehan: When Ron came back I sure was happy because he's one of the nicest guys that ever lived.

Tom Petty: If life has its phases, this period had a calm to it, a peace. I went on tour quite a bit, two or three times in those four years. Just for the fun of it, and we had fantastic tours. Was almost like we'd been reborn. We were full of energy. Ron Blair had come back to the band, right at the end of recording *The Last DJ*. I couldn't have faced a stranger coming in and taking over that role, you know? The band is about much more than just being good musicians. It's your family. It came down to me saying, "Hey, pack your case. You're back in." He's been a joy to play with. It was like having new blood in the band. Huge crowds, and I didn't really notice the time going by, to be honest. Life was so good. After seven years of dating, Dana and I had gotten married. I was just very happy. I built a studio at home, would fool around in there and write songs occasionally.

Around that time Olivia Harrison asked me and Jeff Lynne if we'd go to New York with her and induct George into the Hall of Fame, which of course we did. Part of that deal was we would perform a few of his songs. I rounded up Scott Thurston to play the bass, Steve Ferrone to play drums, and then we had Steve Winwood on the organ and Jim Capaldi on percussion. Dhani Harrison played guitar with Jeff and me, and Prince took the lead on "While My Guitar Gently Weeps." Quite an outfit. It was a great trip.

On the plane coming back, Jeff and I—we hadn't seen a lot of each other for some years—started to talk about why we never recorded together anymore. I had written nine or ten songs and felt like recording, so I went over to Jeff's studio and we did a track that night, just Jeff and Mike and me. I played the drums. It went so well, I liked it so much, that I stayed there for another couple of months, going five days a week over to Jeff's and working very casually on an album.

My daughter Adria art-directed The Last DJ. *Being my kid wouldn't be enough to get me to work with you, but Adria is just a really amazing talent. I respect the work she does. We were both kind of hesitant to work together because we're so hard on one another and can really push each other. But at the same time we both kind of have the same goal—and we're going to pull it off when we get together.*

The photographer she hired for the cover, Blossom, was one of Adria's friends in high school. The kids we were driving around in the backseat are suddenly doing the art direction, telling me to turn a little to the left and stuff.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:

Benmont, Ron, Mike, Steve, 2002.

RIGHT:

Scott, 2003.

When it was time to come up with a Highway Companion *cover I kept thinking that everyone would expect the dusty desert road with an old pair of steer horns or someone hitchhiking. I wanted to take the meaning of the title to another level. Then the idea of the astronaut and the monkey came to me.*

Dana had found a painter on the Web, a fellow named Robert Deyber. I was sitting around thinking about my cover idea, looking at some of his work, and I thought, "Maybe we could just take a shot in the dark and call him up and see if he'd be interested in letting us commission a painting." So we did. We wrote to him, and he wrote back. I was really nervous to ask him to do one of my ideas, but he was very receptive and really got it on the first shot. It came back to me and I just went, "Perfect."

LIFE BETWEEN THE BRANCHES BELOW

Tom Petty: It's so hard to explain the process of writing songs. When you bump into something as big as a song, all you can do is kind of get out of its way and let it happen. When I wrote the songs for *Highway Companion*, I didn't sit down and say, "Well, I'm gonna write about this or that." I just started to play, and the door swung open. In came the songs. I just tried to get it down, to capture it as quick as possible. From there it was just a matter of thanking divine grace or whoever threw the songs in my path. That album clears my mind when I hear it.

Jeff Lynne: They're great songs. I thought they were brilliant as they were and didn't need any interfering with. We just went straight into the studio and recorded them.

Eddie Vedder: "Square One" off *Highway Companion* is really getting to me. It's just beautiful.

Tom Petty: Based on how I describe songwriting—bumping into something that's bigger than me—you could say, "Well, then anyone could write a song. I bump into things all the time." But this isn't true, because if everyone could do it, they would. I've come to recognize that, for some reason, I have something in me that attracts that kind of inspiration. I believe that it's a little bit like being singled out for something, like there's some greater force that says, "Okay, well, this guy's going to have a powerful enough antennae to bring this stuff in." It's the same, I think, with artists in general, not just songwriters. Anyone can paint a picture, but not everyone can paint the kind of picture that stops viewers in their tracks, that seems to possess that immediacy and contains the kind of truth that arrests viewers. Pure technical skill won't get you there. Same holds for songwriting. There's something more to it. I have a respect for the process and try not to force the results, just as much as I try to be ready when the inspiration comes. Being ready is key, because some songs appear almost as entire entities, you know?

Adria Petty: I remember my dad was always working and always making music. Spending a lot of time with legal pads.

Tom Petty: Many of what I consider the best ones seem to appear almost finished. You're sitting there with your guitar or your piano and something comes, just like that. There it is. Did I do that? I guess I did. Then you can take it and finesse it, if it needs it, and maybe change a chord here, find a better line in a spot. I hesitate to try to understand all of this, but only because it seems like applying reason to this kind of process may just make it go away—it's so spiritual. It's a cosmic endeavor. I'm always a little skeptical of songwriters that tell me that they sat down to write this song about so and so and here's how it goes. I've done that, but I didn't feel that great magic.

Rick Rubin: He can channel material in a pretty strong way. I've seen him do it, and it's incredible. I think he's aware of it all the time and is always open to it.

Tom Petty: I'm old enough now to understand that this wasn't an accident. For some reason, I'm able to catch these ideas and make sure they become songs. I'm able to do it and touch millions of people with it. I'm respectful of that. I think it's what I'm here to do, and I'm supposed to do it. It's a job sometimes, but more often than not, it's not a job, it's something I'd do regardless. It's my place of peace as much as it's something to bring to others.

Johnny Cash said this to me one day: "This is noble work." I wasn't sure what he meant. "Noble work?" He goes, "Yeah, it makes a lot of people happy." That hit me like a bolt to the brain. Why didn't I ever have that thought before? I was probably thinking about me being happy. This basic idea Johnny shared seemed revolutionary in some odd way. It makes millions happy. Then I went and played some shows and looked out and as far as you can see people are jumping up and down. They're happy. It helped me to see the value of it and what it meant in these people's lives, because, really, what it means to them is exactly what it meant to me. Music has always been my passport to a better place.

NIGHTWATCHMAN

Tom Petty: I've done this songwriting thing for so long now that I can, sometimes, feel a little overwhelmed by it. If a song comes at one o'clock in the morning, I know I'm not going to get any sleep. There's been times when it comes and you're tired and you go, "Oh, God, not now." Even if it takes me thirty minutes to write it, I'm going to be so geared up by doing it that I won't possibly be able to shut my eyes for hours. I'll pace and think about the song, and the melody will be in my head and completely overtake me. If I do sleep, it will be restless, like a bad production meeting. When I get up in the morning, it'll be the first thing in my brain. But when it all comes together, there's nothing like it. You do it and then wait for it to happen again.

THIRTY YEARS: FRIENDS WEIGH IN

Jeff Lynne: The picture I have of him is the band setting off in this old van from Florida, aiming to travel across the whole United States to L.A. It must have been like *The Beverly Hillbillies*. The top of the van packed with all their worldly goods. And off he went, rumbling into the night. That picture to me is such a great one. It's enduring, you know? And then they arrived. And then they struggled for a bit. And then, they made it big. Then they still made it bigger and bigger and bigger. It's a really sweet story.

Mike Campbell: How did we survive through all that stuff without breaking up or hating each other? I think it's because whatever might have happened, like the death of a friend or egos in collision or wives that don't like each

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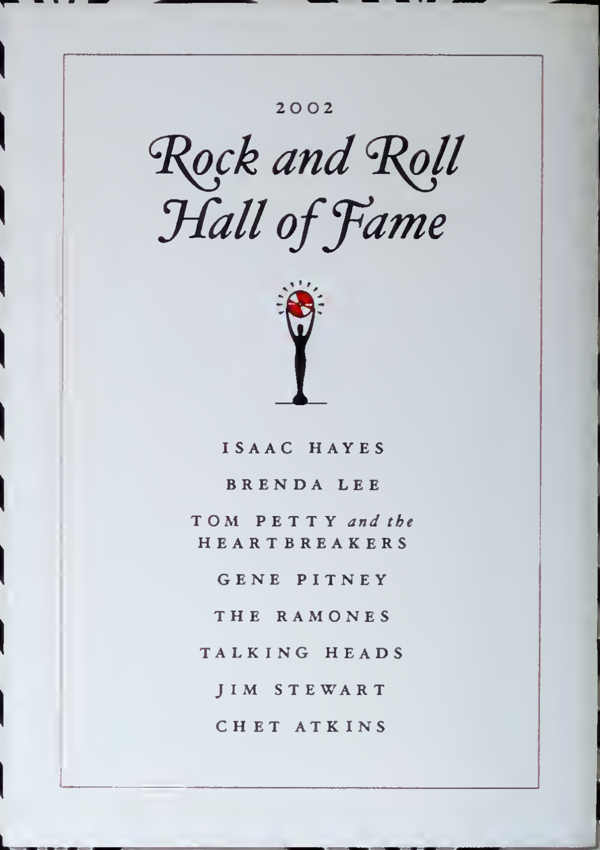
TOM PETTY & THE HEARTBREAKER

GET THEIR STAR ON THE WALK OF



2002

Rock and Roll Hall of Fame

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JIM STEWART

CHET ATKINS

TOM PETTY and the **HEARTBREAKERS**
at the FILLMORE WEST, SAN FRANCISCO USA
JANUARY 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 19, 20, 21, 24,
25, 26, 28, 29, 31 / FEBRUARY 1, 3, 4, 6, 7 1997

TOM PETT
AND THE
HEARTBREAKER
WITH BO DIDDLEY
SATURDAY
AUGUST 16, 2003
AMSOUTH AMPHITHEATRE
TOM PETTY and the HEARTBREAKERS
ACCESS ALL AREAS
2001
PARALLEL 28 EQUIPE
TOM PETTY | HEARTBREAKERS
THE LAST DJ
LIVE
OCT.12-16
THE GRAND OLYMPIC AUDITORIUM
PRODUCTION
BABY, EVEN THE LOSERS GET LUCKY SOMETIMES
Tom Petty & the heartbreakers
live at the Hard Rock Hotel
June 1-2, 2001
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other—all of that stuff that breaks bands up, anytime that stuff happened with this band it always seemed like the joy of playing together outweighed everything else. It never made sense to break up. I don't know why that is with us, but we just love to play together more than anything else.

Benmont Tench: As long as Tom and Mike want to have a band, you know, it would be awfully hard not to play with them. But I didn't think that the band would last thirty minutes, you know?

Denny Cordell: As long as he keeps discovering the inspiration, he will go on forever.

Jimmy Iovine: I think that he captures a side of America that is as relevant today as it was in 1978. There's nothing he can't do. He's that gifted. The minute I met him and he played me those two songs, I knew he would be playing those songs when he was one hundred.

Tony Dimitriades: There are times when I pause and find it almost hard to believe. For thirty years Tom has managed to sustain a vision, without ever compromising, and the band, particularly Mike and Ben, has been right there with him and for him. All the elements were there—great band, great songwriting ability, and a capacity to lead—and Tom respected every one of them. It takes something more than fortitude to do what he has done. It takes inspiration, in the deepest sense of that word.

Dave Grohl: There's that universal element where when you see Tom play and he is singing a song, there's twelve thousand people singing along with him, and they might be singing for twelve thousand reasons. That's the coolest thing in the world when you can get a song that everyone can connect with for their own reasons. You have your reasons for writing—and they have their reasons for singing along. I don't know what the world would be like without Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers. But if I'm still hanging out with the guys in my band in thirty years, fucking shoot me, please.

Rick Rubin: It's incredible that they've managed to exist through so many changes in the world. The world is in such a different place from when they started. But all the young acts seem to look up to Tom Petty. He's one of the people that moves kids in rock bands. They feel the truth of what he's doing. It's sort of a lost art what they do. Great players, great band interaction, and great song writing.

Johnny Depp: There's no real way to categorize it. Yeah, it's rock and roll. You might even say in some instances it's kind of pop. But it's smarter than that. It's, it's sort of intellectual pop or rock and roll. It defies any kind of category really. It's just Tom Petty.

Elliot Roberts: They call it a light in your eye. And whether you're twenty or forty or sixty, if you ever had it, you still have that little light. Tom's got that light.

Jim Lenehan: Somebody asked me how do you get in this business, and I said go to high school with a member of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. That helps. But who would have ever known that they would be in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame? When we were little redneck kids coming out of Gainesville, everybody told us that we were crazy, and we said no, we're right. And we were.

Dave Stewart: They are one of those iconic bands that will be around forever. I am sure that Tom will carry on writing songs and lyrics that will move me, hopefully, until I'm getting older and in a wheelchair. I'm sorry I came along and caused so much turmoil at one point. Now that that's all calmed down, maybe we should get together and have a drink.

Stevie Nicks: The heart of Tom Petty never changes, but he's always evolving as an artist.

Adria Petty: I think it was them against the world in a way. When I imagine them moving to L.A. from Florida—they're like the ultimate American dreamers. There was no doubt in their mind that they were going to make it work. Even the losers get lucky sometimes.

There's something you get from the crowd, and I really don't know where else you get it. It's an incredible jolt of adrenaline and energy and communication. There's an instant approval and affirmation of what you're doing. You are never going to find that in life except for right there. Which is why it's so intoxicating and performers tend to keep doing it. What exactly it is that keeps me going back for more of that, I'm not really sure. But I need to keep doing it.

I do get a little anxious before I go onstage. But once the band is out there and it's working, everything is okay. I feel pretty at ease, probably more comfortable there than I am anywhere else in life. There's just something about it. For that couple of hours onstage time just stops, and there isn't any other world but that one.

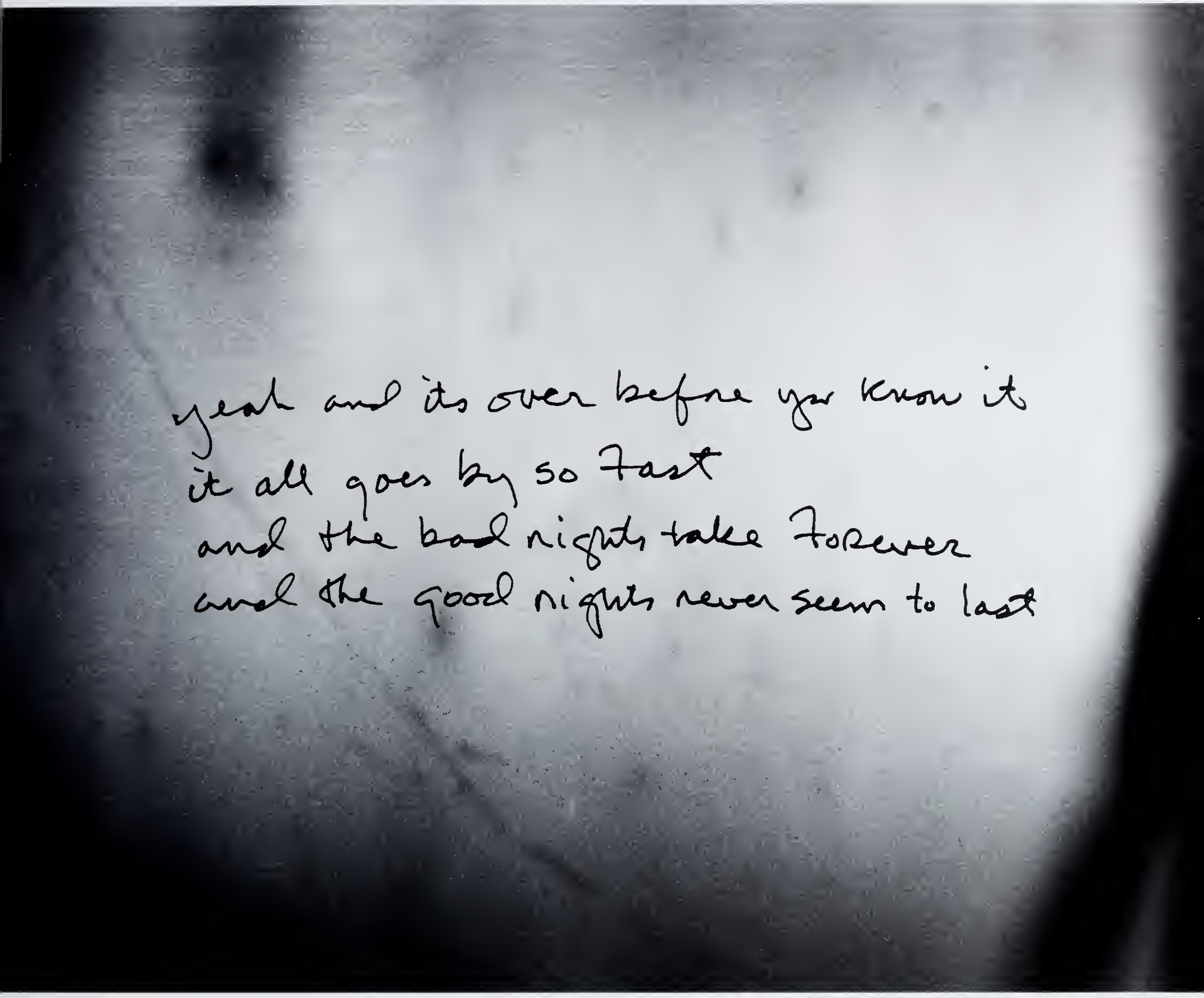
RIGHT:

Bonnaroo Music Festival, Manchester, TN, June 16, 2006.

FOLLOWING PAGES:

The Heartbreakers in 2006.

From left: Mike Campbell, Benmont Tench, Tom Petty, Steve Ferrone, Ron Blair, Scott Thurston.


yeah and its over before you know it
it all goes by so fast
and the bad nights take forever
and the good nights never seem to last

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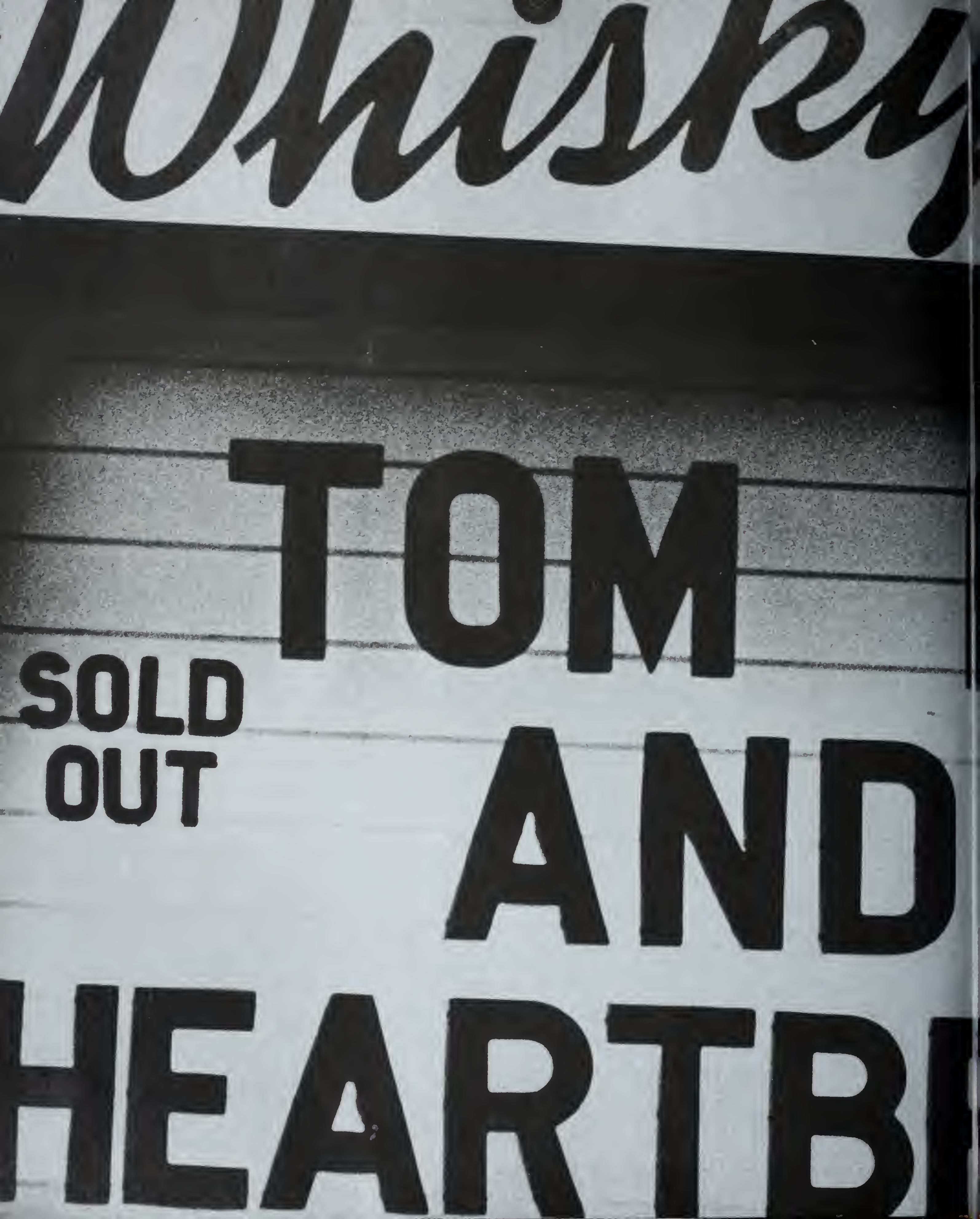
SOLD
OUT
TOM
AND

TOM PETTY AND THE HEARTBREAKERS released their debut album in 1976, launching a career that has resulted in some of the finest rock and roll ever recorded. Petty was also a member of The Traveling Wilburys along with Bob Dylan, George Harrison, Jeff Lynne, and Roy Orbison. In 2002, Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. With more than 30 years behind them, they remain one of the biggest live attractions in rock.

PETER BOGDANOVICH has directed 30 films, including such Oscar® winners as *The Last Picture Show*, *Paper Moon*, and *Mask*. As an actor he has performed in many films and television shows, including recent appearances in *The Sopranos*. He is also the best-selling author of 14 books.

WARREN ZANES has been a visiting professor at Case Western Reserve University and a vice president at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum. He is the author of *Dusty in Memphis* and has written for *Rolling Stone*, *Oxford American*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and other periodicals and scholarly journals. A former member of the Del Fuegos, Zanes has also released two solo recordings.

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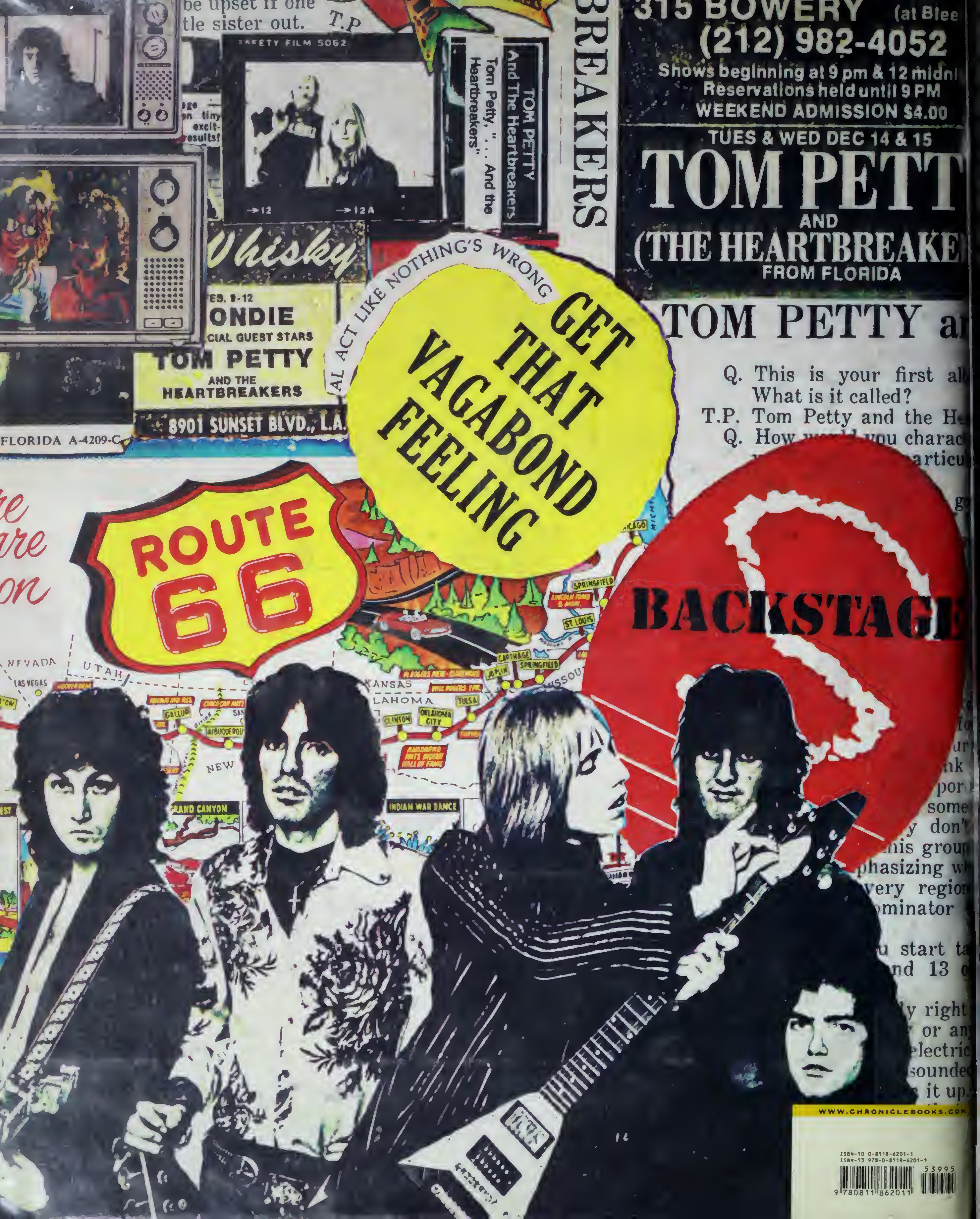

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